SANCTITY THROUGH THE ROSARY

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PREFACE

THE GRANDEUR OF THE ROSARY

Notas facite in populis adinventiones ejus. Make His works KNOWN AMONG THE PEOPLE.[1] In these words the prophet Isaias urges us to make known to all people the works of God. We are often unable to praise the works of genius as we should, but when it is a question of praising God's works we cannot do so; we are reduced to silence and are lost in admiration. Among the works of God there are three so manifestly divine that the human mind can do nothing but abase itself before them: the Incarnation, the Divine Maternity and the Blessed Eucharist.

Next to the works of God are those of Mary and these are all sublime since they are the outcome of love. They are manifold since they are to be found in every age and amongst every people. One of the most sublime of Our Lady's manifestations of love is, without question, the Rosary which has been made known to the whole world by the Order of Preachers and which, since its institution in the XIIIth century, has been an uninterrupted song of praise to Mary.

The institution of the Rosary is much more than a work of genius, for we see in it that supernatural wisdom which theologians reverence in the institution of the Sacraments. We have no intention of putting the Rosary and the Sacraments on the same level, but it is permissible to point out the striking analogy that exists between them.

The Sacraments are in perfect harmony with our human nature which is at once material and spiritual. To desire

[1] Is. 12. 4.

that human beings should perform only purely intellectual acts would be to exclude a necessary element of their happiness. Man's religion and worship requires exterior assistance. Hence the Sacraments, like man, are composed of a body and soul. They have a body in that they are external signs; they have a soul for they possess the invisible power of the Most High. A few words are spoken and immediately the outward sign is encompassed by the might of God, Who passes into the Sacraments since His grace passes into them. When grace takes possession of the soul, at that same moment the soul comes into contact with God.

In the same way true prayer engages the whole man. Now the Rosary is composed of a soul and a body; the body of the Rosary is the vocal prayer; its soul is the consideration of each mystery and the spiritual energy which results from this consideration. Like the Sacraments, the Rosary has, as it were, matter and form. It puts before our imagination the Sacred Humanity of Our Lord and in this way speaks to our bodily nature. By its sublime mysteries the divinity of Christ is set before us and in this way it appeals to our higher nature, wherein we resemble the angels and are like to God Himself.

In the Sacraments the outward sign and the miraculous power of the words combine in the formation of one thing, just as the human nature and the divine nature of Christ are united in one person; so also in the Rosary the vocal prayer and the meditation on the mystery form one indivisible whole. To separate the form of the Sacrament from the matter would be to destroy the Sacrament; to separate the mystery from the vocal recitation would be to destroy the very essence of the Rosary.

The Sacraments are, as it were, the extension and the continuation of the Incarnation. Jesus comes to us in the Sacraments to bless us and to restore us to life. As in the days of His mortal life, He allows that virtue which heals to escape from Him: *Virtue went out from Him and healed*

all.[2] In the Rosary also it is Jesus Who comes to us. At the commencement of each mystery we can say in all truth that the Son of David is about to pass by. *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.*

The Sacraments are those outward marks which distinguish the Christian from the infidel; the Rosary is the distinctive devotion of every true Catholic. The Sacraments are the sweet yet powerful bonds that unite the Children of Christ; by partaking of the same Sacraments the faithful evince their communion in the same faith, the same hope, the same love. By means of the Rosary the children of Mary unite throughout the world and blend their voices in the expression of their common hope and love. The Rosary is like the standard which God raises up before the nations to assemble them from every corner of the universe. *Elevabit signum in nationibus . . . . et . . . . colliget a quatuor plagis terrae. He shall set up a standard unto the nations . . . . and gather together the dispersed from the four quarters of the earth.*[3]

It would be easy to develop at some length this comparison between the Sacraments, instituted by Jesus, and the Rosary, the work of Mary. To sum it up in a few words: the condition of human nature is such that it has to be led by things corporeal and sensible to things spiritual; the Sacraments and the Rosary are signs which help the soul to rise to the contemplation of God and eternity. Man wishes to feed his mind with things spiritual; he thirsts after the infinite; the Sacraments and the Rosary help him to satisfy that desire.

Man, by reason of his bodily nature and its inherent weaknesses, is a creature of time; but because of the powers of his soul and his supernatural destiny, he is also of eternity. Now the Rosary is vast enough to embrace both time and eternity. It includes every period of time because it contains those unfathomable mysteries to which all

[2] Luke, 6. 19.
[3] Is. 11.12.

history converges, whose realisation constitutes what St. Paul calls the fullness of time: *plentitudo temporis.*[4] It includes eternity. The Rosary begins with heaven and ends in eternity with the Mysteries of the Ascension of Jesus and the Crowning of Mary. We commence in the bosom of the Adorable Trinity, we end in the bosom of the Blessed Virgin.

Again the Rosary is the epitome of all Christianity. All that we believe is contained in it. In the very first Mysteries we meet with the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation. The Rosary is, like the Blessed Sacrament and Holy Mass, the memorial of the life, passion, death and resurrection of Our Lord. We dwell on the truths of our last end in the Glorious Mysteries, where they are unfolded in a striking and practical manner. The Rosary, then, is theology, but theology which prays, adores, and says by each of its dogmas: Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

Moral theology which treats of sin and virtue is, in a sense, epitomised in this great devotion. We cannot truly realise the infinite malice of mortal sin until we see, by meditation on the Sorrowful Mysteries, at how fearful a cost the innocent Christ satisfied the demands of divine justice, what a terrible penalty He had to pay on the Cross, how He was forced to cry out under the weight of our sins: *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?* Each one of these Mysteries contains for us a sublime lesson of virtue. They are not merely examples of heroism; they are the very highest points of the mystical life. The Rosary, then, is moral theology which prays, weeps, expiates, rises to heroism in crying out to Christ: *Thou hast redeemed us to God in Thy Blood, and hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests.*[5]

All history we find recapitulated in the Rosary, because the object of this devotion is He to Whom all history points, Whose radiant figure dominates every page of the Old and

[4] Gal. 4 4.

[5] Apoc. 9, 10.

the New Testament. Therefore, the Rosary is history, but history that prays and leads all nations to Christ, Who is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

Even the social question itself has been solved by the Rosary, as Leo XIII so eloquently proved.[6] Why are the nations in fear and in trembling? The answer is threefold, according to the Sovereign Pontiff. The first cause is a growing dislike of a simple and laborious life. The remedy for this evil we find in the Joyful Mysteries. The second cause is repugnance to suffering of any kind. The remedy for this evil is found in the Sorrowful Mysteries. The third cause is forgetfulness of our future life and destiny, which ought to be ever present in our minds to inspire us with hope and courage. The remedy for this evil appears in the Glorious Mysteries. Yes, the Rosary gives us the answer to the social problem in that cry of victory: *Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat! Christ conquers, Christ reigns, Christ rules.*

We see, then, how varied are the aspects of the Rosary. It can adapt itself to every condition, every age, every people. It is a form of prayer so simple in its essence, that anyone, no matter how uneducated or illiterate, can take part in it; in fact, it has been called the psalter of the unlearned. On the other hand, the profundity of its Mysteries makes it the inexhaustible summa of theologians. It is, in truth, the great synthesis of Christianity: all is included in the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary, just as all time is encompassed by the two shores of eternity.

It would be interesting to compare the Rosary with the Summa of St. Thomas and with the Christian Churches of the Middle Ages. Each is, in its own way, a compendium of Christianity; each is, as it were, a poem which unfolds before our eyes the plan of the Almighty in all its splendour; each is a monument which has withstood the onslaught of the centuries; each brings us nearer to God and the supernatural; each is quickened by the same divine life. In the

[6] Encyclical "Laetitiae Sanctae."

Summa, in the ancient cathedral, in the Rosary, the soul experiences that deep joy and contentment which no words can describe; it feels that it has drawn nigh to its true home—to heaven and to God. All three are turned towards the same figure, the dominating figure of Christ; together they form a triple synthesis, a triple teaching, a triple song of love and acknowledgment of the same God and Saviour. The first two are examples of human genius, but in the institution of the Rosary divine wisdom has intervened because it is the work of Mary. We should study in detail this great devotion. We wish to show in outline how the Rosary is a summary of all the works of God.

The work of the Almighty may be expressed in two words: creation and redemption. This sums up all the marvels of the real and the ideal. When these two ambitions of God see completion, then the Almighty will be able to rest. In the work of creation God rested after six days, not because His omnipotence was exhausted, but that he might contemplate the work which He had done and reflect that it was good. *Et vidit Deus quod esset bonum.*[7] But alas! the work of redemption was not to be accomplished so easily or so quickly. The Almighty deferred for a very long time the fulfilment of this cherished desire. He, as it were, allowed Himself to be overcome with fatigue.

To crown a soul with glory or even to endow it with the gift of grace is, in one sense, according to St. Augustine and St. Thomas, a greater act than the creation of heaven and earth. This miracle of grace and of holiness is shown forth in the Rosary. It reveals to us the Author of holiness; it shows us our models in the way of perfection. It instructs us in the practice of holiness. The Author of holiness is Jesus. If we wish to come to a better knowledge and understanding of the Man-God we must study His Heart, His Soul and His Divinity. The Rosary is the book which will teach us all this. Our models in holiness are, after Jesus, Mary and St. Joseph who co-operated with Him

[7] Genes, I. 10.

in the work of redemption. The Rosary will make us appreciate their true rôle in the economy of salvation. The practice of holiness comprises the whole ensemble of Christian perfection, from charity in the lowest degree even to heroic charity. The Rosary will initiate us and finally bring us to the highest degree of the spiritual life.

Our work, therefore, will be divided into three parts:

1. The Rosary and the Author of holiness: Jesus.
2. The Rosary and models of holiness: Mary and Joseph.
3. The Rosary and the practice of holiness.

We do not intend to touch on the other aspects of the Rosary as several learned writers have written extensively on these points. Nor is this a deep study of doctrine. We are simply offering to the reader some theological and pious considerations which will be a help to interior souls. We treat the subject from one special viewpoint, so that we may not repeat what has been set forth in previous writings on the Rosary. According to the wishes and in the interest of certain persons, the chapters are so arranged that, while all are logically connected one with the other, each may form in itself a meditation independent of what follows and what precedes. This explains and justifies some repetitions.

May this little book make the Virgin of the Rosary and her Divine Son better known and better loved.

PART I

THE ROSARY AND THE AUTHOR OF HOLINESS.

I THE ROSARY AND THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

God is infinite perfection and purity, absolute sanctity, beauty ever ancient, ever new. Without diminishing the integrity of His essence, He has made other created beings sharers in a greater or lesser degree of His own divine attributes. To us has been given the power of being able to recognise and admire in creatures these reflections of the perfections of their Maker. Among the beauties of nature we can distinguish two different kinds: beauty which is sublime, and beauty to which we may apply the term gracious. The beauty which we term gracious is seen, for instance, in light, flowers, and in all things which delight and charm us. We recognise beauty which is sublime in the vast ocean, the lofty mountains, the boundless skies. But nowhere is graciousness more truly worthy of our admiration than in the human heart, the heart of a child, of a virgin, the heart of a devoted friend. The poetry which is sweetest, most pleasant, is the poetry of the heart. Again, the depths and sublimity of the ocean have often been compared with the depths and sublimity of the heart. Which is easier to fathom the deep ocean or the human heart? We cannot speak of sublimity without considering the human heart, and in particular the hearts of mothers and saints.

When forming the heart of the first man God had an exemplar, He had before Him an ideal, He thought of the heart of Christ. According to the words of Tertullian: *Christus cogitabatur homo futurus:* Christ, the Man to come, was present in His mind. Ah! it is truly sweet to remember that on the day of our creation God modelled our heart on the heart of His Son.

Therefore, to know all the marvels of our world we must know the human heart. And to know the most perfect of

hearts—the ideal of the human heart—we must enter into the depths of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. If we wish to admire graciousness with all its charms, we must contemplate the Divine Heart of Our Blessed Lord; we must enter into His Sacred Heart. Of Him it has been written: *Speciosa forma prae filiis hominum, diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis. Thou art beautiful above the sons of men, grace is poured abroad in thy lips.*[1] If we wish to admire sublimity in all its grandeur we must study the Heart of Jesus. The Rosary will reveal to us the graciousness and the sublimity of the Sacred Heart.

It would be wrong to consider the Sacred Heart in an abstract manner, separated from the person of Christ. This error has been condemned by theologians. The Rosary is the true revelation of the Sacred Heart which it always represents united to the Third Divine Person and from which it can never be separated. In the Rosary we can contemplate that Heart, living and beating in the time, places and circumstances in which it really lived and throbbed; we can contemplate the sentiments of the Adorable Heart of Our Blessed Lord towards His Eternal Father, towards men, towards Himself. In the first Mysteries it is a heart full of love and tenderness; in the Sorrowful Mysteries it is a heart inebriated with love and overwhelmed with bitterness; in the Glorious Mysteries it is a heart still enraptured with love and exalted in its triumph. In the Joyful Mysteries it is a gracious beauty; in the Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries it is the beauty of the sublime.

We have said that graciousness is admirable above all in the heart of a child. On the day of our baptism our parents looked lovingly into our cradle and re-echoed those words of joy: *Let us rejoice, for a child is born to us, a man is born into the world. Natus est homo in mundum.*[2] The heavenly family leant still more lovingly over the same

[1] Ps, 44, 3.
[2] John, 16. 21.

cradle and said: *A God is born to us, let us rejoice, a God is born to us.* Grace made each of us a son of God, and that tiny heart which had only just begun to throb was already the temple of the Blessed Trinity. The angels, as the poet so beautifully expresses it, contemplate their image in the cradle.

But what are all the attractions of any babe compared with the charms of the Child of Bethlehem and the Heart of the Infant God? For, says St. Paul, the grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men.[3] How touching, naïve, gracious, were the glorious events of that first Christmas night: the song of the angels, the visit of the shepherds, that cradle which sheltered Him Who came to redeem the world! How wonderful it would be to see depicted in a single tableau all the events which accompanied the birth of Jesus!

Such a tableau does exist. It is the Rosary. The Mystery of the Nativity is the principal tableau, the others are grouped round about it as secondary tableaux. There, truly, does the Heart of the Infant Jesus reveal itself with all its graces: *Apparuit gratia Dei Salvatoris nostri.*[4] The language of poetry alone is capable of expressing these exquisite charms. Such language flowed from the heart of St. Alphonsus Liguori in one of his Canticles:

Mary sings—the ravish'd heavens
Hush the music of their spheres;
Soft her voice, her beauty fairer
Than the glancing stars appear;
While to Jesus slumbering nigh,
Thus she sings her lullaby.

Sleep my Babe! My God! My Treasure!
Gently sleep: but ah! the sight
With its beauty so transports me,

[3] Titus, 2. 11.
[4] Titus, 2. 11.

I am dying of delight:
Thou canst not thy Mother see,
Yet thou breathest flames to me.

If within your lids unfolded,
Slumbering eyes you seem so fair;
When upon my gaze you open,
How shall I your beauty bear?
Ah! I tremble when you wake,
Lest my heart with love should break.

Cheeks than sweetest roses sweeter,
Mouth where lurks a smile divine,
Though the kiss my Babe should waken,
I must press those lips to mine.
Pardon, dearest, if I say
Mother's love will take no nay.

As she ceased, the gentle Virgin
Clasped the Infant to her breast,
And upon His radiant forehead
Many a loving kiss impress'd:
Jesus woke, and on her face
Fixed a look of heavenly grace.

Ah! that look, those eyes, that beauty,
How they pierce the Mother's heart;
Shafts of love, from every feature,
Through her gentle bosom dart;
Heart of stone! can I behold
Mary's love, and still be cold?

If alas, O heavenly beauty!
Now so late those charms I learn,
Now at least, and ever, ever,
With Thy love my heart will burn
For the Mother and the Child,
Rose and Lily undefiled.

Beauty of graciousness reveals itself in the heart of a virgin whose every sigh is for her God. But the immaculate emblem of all that is virginal is, assuredly, the Heart of Jesus. Jesus, the virgin God, Son of a virgin Mother, Spouse of a virgin Church. What beauty! Holy souls have well understood it. Ravished with this pure ideal they long to immolate their hearts on the chaste breast of Jesus and taste, close to Him, the austere delights of charity. By your charms, by your beauty, O Divine Spouse of Virgins, reign in the hearts of all men!

Finally, beauty which is gracious manifests itself in the heart of a friend: *Amicus fidelis medicamentum vitae—a faithful friend is the medicine of life,* says the Holy Spirit.[5] He enters into all our joys and sorrows, he solaces us in our grief. But, God is our friend of friends Who remains when all others go away. Friendship can exist only between those who are equals: it is one of the necessary conditions. In the first Mysteries of the Rosary, God makes Himself our equal by taking upon Himself our nature; He makes us His equals by giving us His own. It is truly the loving heart of a friend we feel beating in each Mystery! When Jesus smiled at the shepherds and the Magi, when He instructed the doctors and the unlearned, when He let fall from His lips those consoling words: *Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you!*[6] then we recognise the tender voice of a friend, the loving and devoted Heart of Him Whose delights are to be with the children of men. We shall dwell no longer on the graciousness of the Sacred Heart. Pious meditation on the Mysteries of the Rosary will enable us to taste and delight in its charms.

We must now consider in the Sacred Heart of Jesus beauty which is sublime and heroic. When heroism appears nature is vanquished and God is present. The seeds of heroism are sown in the hearts of all the just; they are

[5] Eccli., 6, 16.
[6] Matt., 11. 28.

the gifts of the Holy Spirit. When circumstances require it these supernatural energies are set in movement and heroism is spontaneously born, as the flower from the seed. That is why the heart of a mother is capable of sublime and noble deeds; that is why the life of a saint is, as it were, woven with heroism. Theologians teach that all the virtues which could adorn His soul were found united in Jesus Christ from the very first instant of His conception. In Him they reached their full perfection. They were practised by Him in the most perfect degree possible—the heroic degree, and in His case heroism was divine. These perfect virtues which adorned His soul have, in a sense, overflowed from His heart upon the world that He might manifest His Heart to us. We can, therefore, declare that He lived a life of heroism in each of His Mysteries: as He lay in the manger, as when He hung upon the cross. In the Sorrowful Mysteries, however, this heroism is more evident than in the other Mysteries.

Can we picture a scene more mysterious, more heart-rending, more sublime than the agony of Jesus? Were we to unite the most poignant anguish, the most bitter sorrows, the most painful sacrifices, the most admirable devotedness which have ever found expression in the human heart, we would have heroism of the highest degree and an ocean of affliction. We could realise from it something of the anguish of a dying man, but it would give us no idea whatever of the agony of the heart of a dying God. This is inexpressible.

But what is it that renders this mystery so sublime? It is love's sacrifice spurned and unheeded. Jesus knew in advance that He was to be misunderstood, despised and persecuted. He heard the echo of that plaintive cry: *love is not loved, love is detested.* And still the love of the Heart of Jesus cries out more loudly than all the impious outrages and sacrileges which He suffered at the hands of men and of demons. His tears cry out, but above all, His love cries out: *Clamant lacrymae, sed super omnia clamat amor.*

We see the self-same heroism in the Scourging at the

Pillar, the Crowning with Thorns, the Carrying of the Cross. At the Praetorium, in the streets of Jerusalem, on the way to Calvary, we hear the cries of the crowd, the insults of the executioners, but above all, we hear the voice of sublimity: *Clamant lacrymae, sed super omnia clamat amor.* Your tears cry out, your wounds cry out, O Jesus, but above all, your love cries out.

At length, God and death come face to face on Golgotha. God and Death! What a meeting! And it is God Who wills, Who wishes to be the conquered one. But death, which appears to triumph, only wins for Jesus a more glorious title: God is Love Omnipotent. He now has a new name: He is the Victim of Love.

The Crucifixion of Jesus is the perfection of sublimity, since here love is made perfect by the consummation and the totality of the sacrifice. There still remained some drops of blood in the heart of the Divine Crucified. Ah! they must be shed. The soldier drew near and opened His side and immediately there came forth blood and water. *Et continuo exivit sanguis et aqua.*[7] And now there is nothing more to give: the sacrifice is complete; it is truly the perfection of love in the perfection of the sacrifice of the Man-God. Thus, sublimity predominates in every scene of the Passion of Jesus, but it is divine sublimity, the depths of which it is impossible for any man or created being to fathom.

In the Mystery of the Resurrection God and death come face to face once again, but this time it is God Who is the conqueror. Heroic in submitting to the ignominy of the grave, the Heart of Jesus is now sublime in triumphing over death and hell in order to bestow on us His own divine life. The last Mysteries are enacted in heaven. It is the sublimity of glory, the sublimity of eternity. We enter into the celestial regions and here does it become us, more than ever, to keep silence, when we recall those words of St. Paul: *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it*

[7] John, 19. 34.

entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him.[8]

We see how admirably all the beauty and magnificence of graciousness and sublimity is found in the depths of the Heart of Jesus, as in the Rosary which reveals this beauty to us. We ought, therefore, to contemplate and honour this divine heart by meditation on the Mysteries of the Rosary, so that we may obtain through the intercession of the Immaculate Mother an abundance of graces from Him Who is their source and plentitude.

II THE ROSARY AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS

We have entered into the heart of Jesus, let us penetrate still further. Deeper than the abysses of the heart are the abysses of the soul. Let us descend even there. Deeper than the abysses of the soul we shall discover the abysses of the divinity. Thus does the Rosary lead us on into the depths of the deep; from the depths and abysses of the heart into the depths and abysses of the soul; from the depths and abysses of the soul into the depths and abysses of the divinity.

Let us enter first of all into the holy soul of Our Saviour. His soul is that masterpiece in which God has united all the perfections of the human and angelic world. The riches of these two worlds are, in a word, knowledge or truth, holiness or grace. The realm of the spirit is a realm of enlightenment; knowledge is like a fire kindled at the summit of the understanding; truth is the glory, the splendour which crowns this radiant summit. But, incomparably more magnificent and noble than knowledge is a will transfigured by grace. This transfiguration is holiness. That which produces it is grace. Therefore, grace and truth are the common treasures of the two intellectual worlds. We shall show that the knowledge and grace of Jesus Christ

[8] 1 Cor., 2. 9.

surpassed the knowledge and grace of the angels and mankind combined. *Plenum gratiae et veritatis,*[9] He is full of grace and truth.

St. Paul declares that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ: *In quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientae et scientiae absconditi.*[10] If a single mind were capable of possessing in itself all the knowledge and understanding of man and angel united, it would surely be a marvel beyond comprehension. Nevertheless, it would be possible to fathom the depths of that mind. It would be, as it were, an ocean, but it would not be a bottomless abyss.

It is impossible to fathom the depths of Jesus Christ. In the exploration of an abyss, new depths unceasingly succeed those already discovered. So also with regard to the knowledge of the Word Incarnate. Those depths which we endeavour to fathom are always followed by other hidden and secret depths. These treasures are hidden, it would be impossible to discover them all.

Distinct from the infinite knowledge which belongs to Christ as God, there were three kinds of knowledge in the soul of Our Lord: beatific, infused, and experimental. From the very first instant of His creation, He could gaze with the eye of His soul on the infinite; He could contemplate God face to face and was enraptured with that torrent of delights which finds its source in eternity. Since we derive all our glory from Christ, it was fitting that He Himself should first possess what He intended to bestow on others. Therefore, He enjoyed glory from His very conception. In virtue of His beatific knowledge, the soul of the Word knew the past, the present and the future. Absolute master as He is of heaven and earth, it is only fitting that He should know everything that happens throughout His kingdom. As He is judge of the living and the dead, He must have a knowledge of everything that will be submitted to His tribunal: our every action, our inmost thoughts, the

[9] John 1, 14.
[10] Col., 2, 3.

most secret movements of our heart. All that is, that has been, that will be, is present to Him.

Meditation on the Mysteries of the Rosary will bring these considerations to our minds. In the Mystery of the Annunciation, for example, we may meditate as follows; Jesus Christ knows me, He thinks of me, He reads all the thoughts of my mind, all the sentiments of my heart. He knows all my ingratitude—and still He loves me. He offers me His Heart and calls me gently by my name. He acknowledges and receives my adoration, my affection, my desires. He sees me enrolled in the great army of the Rosary. He knows that act of love which I make to Him at this very moment, as I recite this decade, and He regards and thanks me in advance. We can continue in the same way in the other Mysteries.

Meditation on the Rosary will thus lead us into the very soul of Jesus. He knows everything we are going to say to Him. He knows in what work we are occupied before we begin our prayers. He is looking at us as we are actually saying our prayers. He knows what we intend doing when we have finished our prayer. These reflections will be a powerful motive to urge us to remain in His presence in an attitude of the greatest respect and ardent love. They will induce us to be most desirous of avoiding everything which would offend Him. We should also bear in mind that we are speaking to One, Who is able and Who wishes to bestow on us the gift of eternal life and happiness. Let us say to Him in each mystery: O blessed soul of my Saviour, for the sake of your joys, your sufferings, your triumphs, help us to attain to the beatific vision so that we may be wholly united to Thee.

In the second place, there was in the soul of Christ a knowledge which was infused as the gift of knowledge is implanted in the angelic intellect. Men are obliged to acquire knowledge from the world round about them. Truth is indeed the manna of the soul, but it must be gathered little by little and only with great labour among

the vast fields of creation. With the angels it is not so: the manna falls directly into their minds. From the very beginning, God infused into them ideas of such range and power that the whole universe lies open to their gaze. It would not be fitting that Christ, Who is king of the angels, should be lacking in a perfection which enriches His subjects. His soul, from the very dawn of its creation was endowed with an infused knowledge incomparably more extensive and wider than the knowledge of the angels. The angels, by reason of that wonderful understanding which has been given them, know everything concerning the works of nature, but they know nothing of the decrees of the Divine Will. They know neither the future nor the secrets of hearts. The soul of the Word, by reason of His infused knowledge, was cognisant of everything that appertains to the gift of wisdom and prophecy: the past, the present, the future, the secrets of hearts. His infused knowledge with regard to the things of creation was as universal as His beatific knowledge. While it introduces us into the sanctuary of the soul of Christ, the Rosary makes us, after a fashion, participators of His infused knowledge. It initiates us into these wonderful Mysteries which were made known to the angelic mind only by degrees. A few moments teach us more about supernatural truths than was revealed to angels during the long centuries which preceded the Incarnation. During the recitation of a few decades our field of vision covers the whole of the supernatural order. Privileged souls, advanced in the ways of prayer, sometimes receive heavenly communication. As a result of their entrance into the soul of Christ they are enlightened with His enlightenment and are enabled to understand His secrets. Infused knowledge is not a rare occurrence in the annals of holiness. Many of the saints have obtained it through meditation on the Mysteries of the Rosary.

We do not aspire to these extraordinary favours; but all of us from the moment when we unite our soul with the soul of Our Redeemer have the right to hope for the grace

of illumination, so that our minds may be better able to comprehend the truths on which we meditate. From this divine soul there will radiate such supernatural brightness as will make the profundities of these Mysteries intelligible for us. Our faith will be strengthened by the recitation of this prayer and the Rosary will be for us a real participation in the infused knowledge of Christ.

Lastly, we must consider the acquired or experimental knowledge of Our Blessed Lord. His two higher forms of knowledge did not destroy the natural activity of His intellect. From a purely human point of view, Jesus Christ was the greatest genius the world has produced or ever will produce. All that is creative or incentive in the soul of a poet, all that is pure and perfect in the soul of an artist, all that is noble and generous in the soul of an orator—all was united in His soul. He is the most perfect representative of humanity. In comparison with Him, other men of genius are only as a child compared to a giant, an obscure planet before the sun. His penetrating mind penetrated the essence of things. With a single glance He took in all. He acquired without difficulty this experimental knowledge which costs us so much labour and fatigue.

By his acquired knowledge alone, He knew all the truths which it is possible for reason to comprehend. He proved all the secrets of nature. He saw, in advance, all the marvellous inventions of which the human mind is capable. He was His own master. Teacher of angels and of men, it was not necessary that He should learn anything from anyone.

Both His beatific and infused knowledge remained invariable because from the beginning they were perfect, but He underwent a true progress in His experimental knowledge. According to St. Thomas, we must take literally these words of the Gospel: *Jesus advanced in wisdom and age.*[11] His understanding developed unceasingly until it reached its perfection.

[11] Luke 2. 52.

But Our Blessed Lord acquired this knowledge by each one of His acts and in the principal events of His life, which we recall when we meditate on the Joyful Mysteries. The Rosary, then, brings us into contact with His experimental knowledge and it is only natural for us to hope that Jesus, our Teacher, will enable us to acquire that human knowledge which is necessary for our state in life. If our vocation requires that we should devote ourselves to study, we shall find a powerful aid in the Psalter of Mary. Let us recite a few Aves, let us enter into the depths of Christ and our work will become easier and more fruitful. Like Jesus, we shall advance swiftly in knowledge and in wisdom. Some of the most celebrated men of the world sought a refuge in the Rosary when their inspirations seemed to have deserted them. We may see to this day two large rosaries which belonged to Michelangelo and which appear to have been frequently used. The following are the well-known words of Joseph Haydn: *When all does not go well with my composition I walk up and down my room, Rosary in hand, and recite some Ave Marias and soon my ideas return to me anew.*

Happy is the study which is thus conducted. Blessed are the moments passed in union with the adorable soul of Him Who is the creator of genius and the author of holiness.

III THE ROSARY AND THE GRACE OF JESUS

The Rosary has revealed something to us of the threefold knowledge of the Word Incarnate; but if the revelation of His soul is to be complete, we must consider in it the plenitude of grace. It is grace, above all, which produces beauty in beings. One of the saints has remarked that if we were to see a soul in the state of grace we should die of wonder and joy; and according to St. Thomas the bestowal of grace on a sinner is, in a certain sense, a greater act than

the creation of heaven and earth.[12] To describe, then, the beauties of grace is to describe the splendours of the soul of Jesus and it is impossible for us to surmise the treasures of this adorable soul, unless we realise the value or the worth of grace. For that reason, we shall endeavour to describe in outline the marvellous operations of grace in the soul of Our Saviour. We shall finally indicate how the grace of Christ is communicated to us by the Rosary.

Grace is a heavenly gift which makes us supernatural beings, God-like and the abode of God Himself. First of all, it widens the narrow confines of our nature and raises us above humanity and even above the angelic nature.

If grace had not been bestowed on the angels, they would be on a lower plane than man; and in heaven the saints, who have attained to a greater degree of grace than the angels, will surpass them in glory. Should God have created more perfect beings even than the Seraphim and not have endowed them with the gift of grace, we should still have to exclaim: higher! higher! this is not the supernatural.

The supernatural raises us to the level of God Himself, it is a second nature added to our first nature. In the natural order we have a soul; in the supernatural order we also have a soul. Grace, says St. Augustine, is the soul of our soul. In the natural order we have faculties: understanding, a will, the senses. Our faculties in the supernatural order are the infused virtues. There are, first of all, the theological virtues reaching out to lay hold on God Himself; then, the cardinal virtues with all their various divisions; still higher, the gifts of the Holy Spirit which implant in us the seeds of heroism. But this is not all; the virtues and the gifts are crowned by the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost and by what are called the evangelical beatitudes. Such then, in a few words, is the wonderful supernatural organism. At the foundation is grace; then, the infused virtues; higher, the seven gifts; still higher, the twelve fruits of the Holy

[12] S.T, III, Q. 113, a.9.

Spirit; at the very summit, the evangelical beatitudes.

As yet, however, we have said nothing. Grace actually makes us divine, God-like. *Ego dixi, dii estis*! *I have said*: *You are Gods.*[13] If we were able to penetrate into the souls of the just, we should perceive there the divine characteristics and, so to speak, the features of God. Grace, to use the expression of the holy Doctors, is that bright mirror in which God contemplates Himself and sees His image. But God cannot recognise Himself except in that which is divine. If we are the mirror of the Lord, we should reflect and show forth divine traits in ourselves. When we salute a soul in the state of grace, let us inwardly salute the image of God! *Divinae consortes naturae,* says St. Peter.[14] Grace makes us partakers of the divine nature.

When gold is plunged into a furnace it takes on the colour, heat and flame of fire, whilst at the same time retaining all its own properties. Grace plunges us into the divine essence, and man, without ceasing to be man, is filled with God! He thinks in God, he acts in God, he loves in God. Kings are proud of their royal lineage. There flows in the veins of all the just a royal blood, a divine blood which has come to us from Jesus Christ, just as the vine transmits life and growth even to the furthermost offshoots. The heroes of pagan antiquity wished to be considered sons of God. That was a sacriligious fable, but for us it is a reality. Our genealogy is truly celestial; we can say with St. Paul: *Genus sumus Dei: we are the offspring of God.*[15] This is our claim to nobility, we have the right to glory in it.

Finally grace gives us the very person of God Himself. It is that adorable mystery which theologians call the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity.

Grace consecrates our soul by its invisible anointing and makes of it a temple wherein God takes His delight. *Vos*

[13] Ps., 81, 6.
[14] 2 Peter, 1, 4.
[15] Act, 17, 28, 29.

estis Templum Dei Vivi: *You are the temple of the Living God,* says St. Paul,[16] and St. Bernard remarks that the ceremonies of baptism very closely resemble the ceremonies prescribed for the consecration of a church. But a temple or a church is built precisely that God may dwell therein. The three divine persons come into the soul and make their abode in it. *Ad eum veniemus et mansionem apud eum faciemus.*[17] The Trinity, then, is truly present in the souls of the just. As the Chalice really contains the blood of Jesus, so also does our soul possess the Holy Spirit. Both the chalice of the altar and the chalice of a holy soul shelter God.

The indwelling of the Trinity is the presence of a friend with a friend, of a spouse with a spouse. If we are in trouble there is no need to go far in order to find a consoler. All we have to do is to enter into the sanctuary of our soul, and the Three Divine Persons are always there to banish our sorrows and dry our tears. They transform our outlook and make us see everything from the point of view of eternity, so that in all the events of life we see but the fulfilment of the divine plan. As Holy Scripture says: *Ecce Dominus transit*! *Behold the Lord passeth*![18] They transform our will, so that we perceive the will of God in whatever befalls us; trials, even death itself, become a beverage which we drink with eagerness and delight.

Finally, they transform our body. In truth, the bodies of the saints possess a secret beauty, a hidden splendour, which sometimes is revealed at the hour of death. Even in the tomb, our very dust is overshadowed by the majesty of the divinity. Even in corruption, our members bear, as it were, an invisible inscription which declares that these members were once the temple of the Trinity. They are sacred until the resurrection.

In speaking of grace, we have not departed from the

[16] 2 Cor., 6, 16.
[17] John, 14, 23.
[18] 3 Kings, 19, 11.

consideration of Our Blessed Lord because on His soul alone were lavished all the treasures of grace. All these supernatural wonders we have touched on were found in Him in an eminent degree. From the very first instant of His creation, His blessed soul was inundated with torrents of grace. Wherever there is a source or cause we find that its influence on other things increases according as they draw near to it. The nearer we draw to a furnace, the more we feel the effects of its heat. God is the fountain, the ocean of grace, the hearth, home, the sun of love. But is it possible to be united more closely to God than was the soul of Our Redeemer? The divinity and His most holy soul were united in an embrace so ineffable and intimate, that there resulted therefrom but one person. His soul, coming into such close contact with the ocean of grace, was deluged by it; the ocean poured in and filled up all its depths, even to overflowing. When plenitude overflows, it is impossible to add any more. What can one add to an abyss when that abyss is filled?

Under the influence of this grace, all the virtues expanded in the soul of the Word, all blossomed forth into the exquisite flower of heroism. The vices which belong to the state of imperfection found no place in that garden. But the natural virtues, the infused virtues, the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, the power of miracles and the gift of prophecy blossomed forth as on virgin soil fertilized by the sun of eternity. Nature and grace reached their full perfection in the soul of Jesus. Were we to behold that soul, we should fall into an ecstasy of admiration, rapture and love. God reserves this ravishment for eternity, but we can get a foretaste of it by means of the Rosary.

In order to get a true revelation of a soul, we must be able to study and see it in all those circumstances and occasions which are likely to bring to light its real nature. But, what incidents reflect more clearly the depths of the soul of Jesus than those recalled in the Mysteries of the Rosary? Grace shone in each of the Mysteries through the

transparent veil of His flesh. It was enough to see Jesus working, speaking, teaching, to catch a glimpse of the brightness of His hidden grace. So also, in silent meditation on the Rosary, the soul of Christ passes before our eyes. His grace once again shines through the mystery. He makes His presence felt by us. We draw near to Him. The Rosary is the living revelation of the soul of Christ and of its divine riches.

We should like to show, above all, that the Rosary actually applies to us the grace of Our Redeemer. The grace Christ received constituted Him the spiritual head of all humanity and rendered Him capable of meriting for us. We do not receive a single supernatural thing which does not accrue to us from this first principle. Jesus is the great reservoir from which all men must draw if they wish to be saved. He is the vast ocean of grace. We draw from it unceasingly and this profound abyss remains always full. But the humanity of the Word merited this grace for us by each one of His Mysteries. We see, then, how meditation on the Rosary brings us into contact with the source, whence salvation comes to us. Communication is established between Christ and us. His divine life bursts in upon our soul. According to one holy Doctor, each Mystery is as a fruitful breast, from which flows the milk of grace. While reciting the decades we, so to speak, drink the milk of heaven.

We must be careful, no doubt, to avoid exaggeration in this matter. We do not mean to say that the Rosary directly applies sanctifying grace to our souls after the manner of the Sacraments. Such efficacy is not proper to the Rosary or to any other devotion. It would be an error to assert that the recitation suffices of itself to give us an increase of grace; but we are labouring under no illusion whatever, if we believe that through uniting ourselves piously with the Mysteries which have worked out our salvation, God will grant many actual graces to our souls. As the Gospel points out, it was sufficient to touch the garments of the Saviour

in order to be healed. In the Rosary we touch, as it were, the mantle of Jesus. May we not hope that a virtue which heals will escape from it? *Virtus de illo exibat et sanabat omnes.*[19]

The Mystery which expiated our sins of pride will help us especially in the practice of humility; the Mystery which expiated impure vice will help us in the practice of the virtue of chastity, and likewise with the other Mysteries.

Our Blessed Lord is the light, the sun, which enlightens every man coming into the world; the Rosary exposes us to its heat and light. We assist at the rising of the sun of justice in the Mysteries of the Annunciation and the Nativity; we contemplate it at noon, in all its glory, while we meditate on the Glorious Mysteries. Its rays beam down on us, we reflect its brilliance. Our soul is rekindled by the fire of the divinity. Oh! if we only knew how to profit by this precious devotion, how quickly we would advance in the spiritual life! In the Rosary the greatest saints of the Order of St. Dominic found the secret of their holiness. (Br. M. Raphael Meysson, O.P., of holy memory used to call the Rosary the secret of holiness.) Hidden in the adorable soul of their God, they drank deeply from the source of all grace and obtained a little of that heroism which detaches us from earth. They tasted a little of that ineffable rapture which is a foretaste of heaven. Let us like these privileged souls descend every day into the depths of the soul of our Well-Beloved, to the source of salvation and happiness. The enemy cannot violate this sanctuary; the evil one, who finds easy entrance into worldly-minded souls, will never get access into those luminous depths where reigns a perpetual calm.

IV THE ROSARY AND THE DIVINITY OF JESUS

To dwell in the soul of the Word is to live in a region far removed from the turmoil of the world, on a Thabor serene,

[19] Luke, 6, 19.

on a summit close by to the heaven of heavens. If the splendour of this soul is reflected in us, we progress in the knowledge of Christ: that is the illuminative way. It is not, however, the topmost peak of the mystical life. To come into contact with God, to be united to God, to lose oneself in God, is the summit of sanctity and holiness. For this reason the final phase of perfection is called the unitive way, when the soul loses itself, and is hidden in God. St. Paul summed up this truth of the spiritual life in a famous text: *Vita vestra est abscondita cum Christo in Deo. Your life is hid with Christ in God.*[20] Our life is hidden in the soul of Christ, *cum Christo.* This is the illuminative way. We are hidden with Christ in the profundities of the divinity, *in Deo.* This is the unitive way. The Rosary is the door which throws open to us the path to the illuminative way by leading us into the soul of the Saviour. It will now initiate us into the secrets of the unitive way by enabling us to penetrate into the inmost depths of the Divinity itself.

The apostle St. John used to recall with a thrill of joy that his hands had touched the Word of Life: *Quod manus nostrae contrectaverunt de Verbo vitae : what our hands have handled of the Word of Life.*[21] The Rosary makes us experience a similar happiness. It brings us near to this Man whose name is honey in the mouth, music in the ear, and gladness in the heart. But the body of Christ was penetrated entirely by the divinity. By the hypostatic union, that unutterable unction which anointed Jesus, all the oil of the divinity was poured forth upon the humanity of the Word. *Unixit te Deus oleo laetitae.*[22] *Unixit te Deus. Thy God hath anointed thee.* His soul received this joyful anointing, His heart received it, His whole being received it. This mysterious oil permeated every action of Our Redeemer: it was a God Who trembled when His Heart sighed and when His Soul trembled. In order to advance

[20] Col., 3, 3.
[21] I Ep. John, 1. 1.
[22] Ps. 44, 8.

to the contemplation of the divinity there is no need for us to look for another form of prayer than the Rosary, if we remember Who is proposed for our consideration in each Mystery, Who acts and the action He performs. The person is the Eternal Word; the action is theandric, that is to say, divine and human; it is embalmed by the joyous unction of the Godhead. The Deity animates, quickens and operates in every one of the Mysteries of the Rosary. Let us not stop short at the surface, the shell; let us advance into the interior, the kernal. The shell is the external events which form an essential part of the Mystery; the kernal is the interior of Jesus: His heart, His soul, His divinity. If we take refuge for a few moments in these adorable abysses, perhaps, we too shall be favoured with a little of that joyful anointing which made Jesus the most beautiful of the sons of men.

The Rosary has introduced us into the sanctuary of the divinity, it will now help us to fathom the deep things of God. Is this a cause of astonishment? Are not the Mysteries of the Rosary revealed to us by the all powerful Spirit, Who, as St. Paul says, searcheth all things, yea, even the deep things of God: *Nobis autem revelavit Deus per Spirituum suum. Spiritus enim omnia scrutatur etiam profunda Dei.*[23]

The profundities of God consist primarily in the intimate life of God Himself; the Eternal Family, the Adorable Trinity, the First Love, the First Beauty: three divine persons united in an eternal embrace and re-echoing unceasingly, one to the other: love! love! love! And this triple embrace is but a single embrace; and this triple love is but one love. *Et hi tres unum sunt. And these three are one.*[24]

Now, in each Mystery of the Rosary we find the Blessed Trinity. The three persons are there by reason of that ineffable law, which unites them one to the other. The Word alone assumed our frail human nature, but all three

[23] I, Cor., 2, 10.
[24] I Epist., John, 5, 7.

co-operated in the Incarnation and Redemption. In the first Mystery they hold counsel anew and repeat their creative word: *Let us make man to our image and likeness.* When the great work is accomplished, and they see this virginal Humanity coming forth from their hands, they say without irony: *Ecce Adam quasi unus ex nobis factus est. Behold Adam is become as one of us.*[25] And again, when they contemplate this innocent Humanity in agony, upon the cross, they pronounce these words of pardon: *Non igitur ultra percutiam omnem animam viventem sicut feci : Therefore, I will no more destroy every living soul as I have done.*[26]

The deep things of God, under another aspect, are His mercy and His justice. How are we to reconcile these two attributes: the infinite vengeance of God upon sin and His infinite mercy towards the sinner? The Rosary gives us the clue to the mystery. We need only look upon the cross during the fifth Sorrowful Mystery. There mercy and justice have kissed in an eternal embrace.

Sometimes man wavers in the execution of human justice, but divine justice never yields. Even God's pardon is just because Jesus made reparation for the guilty. Infinite love, infinite justice, this is what God wrote upon the cross with the blood of His Son. Let us also go up on the cross, that we may embrace the divinity.

Again, the mysteries of predestination and glory, give us some idea of the deep things of God. The Rosary does not raise the veil which hides these depths, but at least it casts some consoling rays of light upon the darkness. It shows us Jesus, the model of all the predestined, and teaches us that we must be made conformable to Him. The Glorious Mysteries of the Resurrection and the Ascension give us some notion, though imperfect, of glory.

Eternity is still another of the deep things of God. But eternity has already begun in us. Faith, says St. Bernard, has a span large enough to contain eternity itself, and St.

[25] Genes., 3. 22.
[26] Genes., 8. 21.

Paul tells us that Faith is *the substance of things to be hoped for ! Sperandarum substantia rerum.*[27] Faith is in such intimate relation with God, that what we believe by faith and what we see by the beatific vision are one and the same thing. We may say the Rosary has the same property as faith, because the Rosary is the résumé of faith, inasmuch as its Mysteries contain all the truths which faith requires us to believe. Therefore, by faith and by the Rosary the future already exists in the present; we already possess the good things we hope for.

St. Paul uses other words still more emphatic: Faith, he says, is the beginning of God: *Initium substantiae ejus. The beginning of His substance.*[28] Therefore, by faith there is in the soul of a Christian the seed of God, the principle and the beginning of eternity.

But the Rosary brings us into contact with eternity in a special way, because the Man-God whom we adore in each Mystery is, to use the expression of St. Catherine of Siena, the bridge placed between time and eternity. He touches the bank of time because of His human nature; the bank of eternity because of His divine nature and person. In commencing the recitation we can unite ourselves with the Man-God and allow ourselves to be carried up on the bridge of time. At the end of our prayer we shall have unconsciously reached the bank of eternity. Thus we have considered all the profundities of God which are revealed to us in the Rosary: the intimate life of the Blessed Trinity, divine mercy and justice, the mysteries of predestination and glory, eternity and the secrets of the infinite.

Souls who are called to a life of union will find inestimable resources in the Rosary because the Rosary is the most sublime, the surest and the easiest form of contemplation. It is the most sublime because we are at once cast into the depths of the infinite, where souls can meditate without ceasing and never exhaust its riches. Always there are new

[27] Heb., 11, 1.
[28] Heb., 3. 14.

abysses to be fathomed. It is impossible to go beyond the divinity, and for that reason it is impossible to go farther or higher than the meditation of the Rosary.

Then, it is the surest way. There is danger of being deceived if we consider the divinity as living in the abstract, a form of life which has no relation to man. The Rosary shows us the true life of God and His dealings with man, making it His delight to dwell among us to converse with the children of men.

Lastly, it is of all ways the easiest. Our natural manner of comprehension is to rise from the material to the spiritual, from things visible to things invisible. In the meditation of the Rosary we rise from the visible humanity of the Word, to the contemplation of the invisible divinity. Sweetly and unconsciously we go from Christ visible to Christ God. The son of Mary is God Himself and we can repeat these words of the Psalmist: *quam bonus Israel Deus. How good is God to Israel.*[29] Pious souls will know how to complete these reflections themselves, and will realise that the Rosary is able to meet the needs of all.

There are souls for whom the purely abstract has no attraction. Even when speaking to God, they feel the need of addressing a heart of flesh like their own, a heart which throbs and beats. They will find in the Rosary the Heart of Jesus. There are others whose keen intelligence feeds on spiritual beauties, whose penetrating eye longs to contemplate the heaven of spirits. These latter will find in the Rosary the soul of Jesus. There are still others who soar towards the highest summits of contemplation. They are capable of fixing their regard on the heaven of heavens. They will find in the Rosary the divinity of Jesus. The Sacred Heart for beginners, the soul of the Word for the more advanced, the divinity for the perfect. The heart, soul and divinity are three dwellings wherein we must dwell at one and the same time. They must never be entirely separated. Even beginners must penetrate into the

[29] Ps., 72, I.

soul and divinity of Jesus; the perfect must ever be mindful of His soul and heart.

Death will not separate us from this trinity, on the contrary it will permit us to abide more perfectly in the heart, soul and divinity of our Well-Beloved. *Videbimus, Laudabimus, amabimus.* We shall see our Well-Beloved, we shall praise Him, we shall love Him. This is the wonderful trilogy of happiness which is commenced here below in the Rosary. With you, O Mary, we shall ever dwell in these three eternal tabernacles of your Son. We shall see Him, we shall praise Him, we shall adore Him.

PART II

MODELS OF HOLINESS: MARY AND JOSEPH

I THE ROSARY AND MARY

Having considered the Heart, Soul and Divinity of Jesus in the Rosary and tasted at their source these supernatural delights, it is fitting and desirable that we should consider the Queen of the Holy Rosary herself. Jesus Christ before He died left us a double testament: The Eucharist and His mother. The very mention of these two names fills every heart with joy. They sum up all the interior peace and happiness of the priest; they are the source of all the austere delights of virginity; they are the consolation and the hope of the dying; they promise pardon to the sinner. For us also they have a meaning because Mary and the Eucharist were the last parting gifts of Jesus to us. On the eve of His death He instituted the Eucharist; He gave us His mother shortly before He breathed forth His last sigh. The gift of a dying person, even the smallest object, is treasured beyond measure by those he leaves behind: but when He who is dying is a God? Ah! Yes! Men have made no mistake here; they have always realised the inestimable value of the last parting gifts of Jesus to us. They have always entertained a passionate love for Mary and the Eucharist. Mary will ever be loved while hearts beat upon this earth.

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin, then, is one of the fundamental principles of Christianity. But the Rosary is the true expression of that devotion. In the first place, it is the most powerful prayer we can send to Mary. As a child by its repeated cries obliges its mother to come to its aid, so also do we compel Mary to answer our petition. We say one Hail Mary. This is in itself a wonderful prayer. We repeat it ten times to increase its efficacy and when the decade is finished we begin all over again, until this song

of love ascends to heaven one hundred and fifty times, and it becomes a powerful cry which penetrates the skies.

Secondly, in the Rosary we assign to Mary her true place in the divine plan. For in this prayer we go to God through Mary, we do all through Mary, we expect all from Mary, as if salvation came to us through her. Such indeed, is the rôle of Mary in the Incarnation; she is in very truth a cause of our salvation. To appreciate rightly the part Mary plays in the Rosary, we must understand the part she played in the great work of the Redemption of Christians.

With regard to salvation there are three essential points to be borne in mind: predestination, grace, death. First of all there is that divine choice which God makes of a soul from all eternity by which he separates it from the mass of the reprobate. Then there is the grace which He bestows on it, by which He sanctifies it in time. Lastly comes a happy death which puts the seal on predestination and is the crowning point of grace. Mary has an important rôle in these three phases of salvation. She is the model of our predestination; she is the channel by which all grace comes to us; she is the patroness of a happy death. When we have developed these three thoughts we shall know enough to be able rightly to appreciate the part of Mary in the Rosary and in the economy of salvation.

Predestination, in its proper sense, is a certain divine preordination from eternity of those things which are to be done in time by the grace of God. To be predestinated is to be directed towards salvation. Predestination, says St. Augustine, is the preparation for God's benefits. It is that merciful act by which God from all eternity loves us gratuitously, chooses us freely and guides us surely and infallibly towards glory and happiness.

Predestination presupposes election in the order of intention and election presupposes love. The reason of this is that predestination is a part of providence. Providence is the plan existing in the intellect directing and ordering of some things toward an end. But nothing is directed towards an

end unless that end is already desired or intended. Whence the predestination of some to eternal salvation presupposes, in order of intention, that God wills their salvation; and to this belong both election and love: it presupposes love, inasmuch as He wills them this particular good of eternal salvation, since to love is to wish well to anyone; it presupposes election inasmuch as He wills this good to some in preference to others Whom He does not select to receive this gift. Whence all the predestinate are objects of election and love. But in choosing His loved souls God has in mind a model, He contemplates an ideal, His Well-Beloved par excellence—Christ Jesus. For that reason Christ has been called the mould of all the predestined. The teaching of St. Thomas concerning this matter is very profound.[1] When a masterpiece of any kind is broken, the craftsman, in order to repair and restore it to its first perfection, casts it a second time into the mould from which it came forth. Thus, the same mould serves both to fashion and repair the handiwork. Man, the masterpiece of the divinity, was crushed by the demon. God, in order to restore him to his pristine perfection, cast him once again into the mould in which He fashioned him. The exemplar, this divine model, is the Word of God, by Whom we were created, by Whom we were redeemed. The Word of God, His eternal concept, is the exemplary likeness of all creatures. God, by predestinating us from eternity, so decreed our salvation that it should be achieved through Jesus Christ; for that reason the Word was made flesh so that He might be the cause of our salvation in the manner decreed by His Heavenly Father. Hence it is not possible for us to obtain salvation except through Jesus Christ. To gain entrance into heaven we must bear resemblance to Him, our eternal exemplar, for we are predestinated to the adoption of sons which is a participated likeness of His natural sonship. We are predestinated to be made conformable to the image of the Son of God. Whence it is written *Praedestinavit conformes fieri imaginis Filii*

[1] III S.T. Q. 3. a.8.

sui.[2] All the predestined are moulded in Jesus.

St. Augustine says that Mary is the mould of Jesus. There is a truly ineffable resemblance between the body of Jesus and the body of Mary, the soul of Jesus and the soul of Mary, the predestination of Jesus and the predestination of Mary. The same act which decreed the Incarnation decreed also the existence of the Blessed Virgin; the image of Christ and the image of Mary were eternally united in the mind of God. It is true to say that Mary was made to the likeness of Jesus and Jesus made to the likeness of Mary. St. Augustine therefore rightly called Mary *Forma Dei.* Mary is the mould of Christ and thus the mould of God. It was in the designs of the Eternal Father that the first of His elect, the head of all the predestined, should be formed by the co-operation of the Blessed Virgin. He also wills that the rest of the elect should be cast into that same virginal mould. Coming forth from it they are other Christs, His well beloved ones, His chosen ones. As God has predestined us all to be made conformable to the image of His Son, He likewise has predestined us to be made conformable to the image of Mary. How wonderful to think that God in creating us makes us to the likeness of Mary! He models us on her so that we have something in us of the characteristics, the beauty of Mary.

Therefore, no matter what station in life we may occupy, we are all fashioned in the mould of our Mother. God contemplates Mary in the predestination of Christian spouses, Christian mothers, virgins, religious, priests.

When God creates the heart of a Christian spouse, He models it on the heart of Mary. He wishes family life to be sanctified by a little of that chaste love which Mary cherished for St. Joseph. Again, the heart of Mary is the ideal according to which God conceives that masterpiece—the maternal heart. Were we to contemplate the heroism of every mother that ever existed, we should have a treasure of heroism; yet all this love, all this heroism, would not

[2] Rom., 8, 29.

equal the love and heroism of the Mother of God. May mothers endeavour to live up to their lofty calling. The more heroic they are, the nearer they approach to their heavenly ideal, for they are predestined to become conformable to the image of Mary.

In predestinating a virgin God contemplates Mary! The examplar of all virgins is the Adorable Trinity, so in predestinating Mary, the Trinity contemplated itself; but in predestinating all other virgins it wills to take Mary for its model. The Church entertains the greatest respect for her virgins. As if virtue alone did not suffice to set them apart from the rest of men, she prescribes a solemn ceremony for the consecration of a spouse of Christ. She has for a virgin, by reason of her state, the same respect and reverence which she has for the chalice of the altar. She consecrates a religious just as she consecrates a chalice.

But God treats His virgins with even still more respect. He puts into their souls something angelic and beautiful which makes them mirror forth here below in a special way the image and likeness of Mary; in short, they go through the world under the protection of the purity of the Mother of God. They are innumerable, this chaste and immaculate generation. We find them in every nation and among every people. They are ready to alleviate all distress, both spiritual and temporal. They instruct the ignorant; they comfort the sick; they sweeten the bitterness of unfilled desires. How wonderful indeed is their vocation! They are destined to reflect in themselves the image of Mary during time and eternity.

Finally, in predestinating a priest, God contemplates Mary. There exists between Mary and the priest a striking analogy. Both are mediators between God and man. Mary is co-redemptrix, the priest is co-redemptor. By virtue of his sacred ministry he redeems souls, for he raises them from the dead by restoring or bestowing grace through the Sacraments. Mary is a virgin, so is the priest, yet both are able to say to Jesus, though in a different sense, *Filius meus*

es tu, ego hodie genui te: Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.[3] By the words of consecration which the priest pronounces Jesus is born again in that sacramental and mysterious life which He leads on our altars.

Again Mary and the priest beget Jesus in souls. Mary helps the priest to give life to the sinner; the priest has need of the mediation of Mary if his labour among souls is to be efficacious. Such, then, is the rôle of Mary in the mystery of predestination. The spouse, the virgin and the priest are cast into this immaculate mould. But, eternal predestination is fulfilled in time only with the free co-operation of man. The divine ideal must be realised in us with the co-operation of Mary. But, in order faithfully to reproduce a model, we must have that model ever before our eyes. In the Rosary Mary poses, as it were, before us. Each one of the Mysteries reveals one of her traits. And now all that we have said about the Heart and Soul of Jesus applies equally with regard to Mary. The heart and soul of Mary are manifested to us in the Mysteries, with all their treasures and inexpressible beauties. Thus it is easy for us to imitate this perfect model of our predestination by practising the virtue pointed out in each Mystery. We may find it helpful to devote one week to cultivating the virtue of humility, another week to charity . . . and so on. If a week does not suffice, let us devote a month or a year. It does not matter how long if eventually we reproduce these virtues in our souls. May we ever be able to contemplate in ourselves the loved image of our Mother.

II MARY, THE MOTHER OF GRACE

We have seen how the Rosary makes us conformable to the ravishing ideal of our predestination, the Immaculate Mother of Jesus. Since predestination is realised in our souls

[3] Ps., 2, 7.

by the operations of grace, we must examine the position of the Blessed Virgin in relation to grace.

Grace being a participation of the divine nature, God alone can produce it in us, because He alone can communicate to us His own life and nature. Jesus, as God, is like His Father, the Author of grace; as God and Man He is the principal meritorious cause of all our spiritual goods. His adorable humanity possesses a deep and mysterious efficacy. It is the instrument which God makes use of for the daily production of grace in us. Now, an instrument does not bring forth the action of the principal agent by its own power, but in virtue of the principal agent. Hence Christ's humanity does not cause grace by its own power, but by virtue of the divine nature joined to it, whereby the actions of Christ's humanity are saving actions. The Gospel tells us that a virtue which healed the body went forth from Our Blessed Lord. There also escapes from His sacred humanity a powerful virtue which heals our souls, by pouring into them the gift which sanctifies.

If Jesus Christ is the sole reservoir of the fruitful waters of salvation, Mary is the channel through which they come to us. She is not the source, for she herself has received everything from her Son, but all must pass through her in order to reach us. She does not produce grace of herself. The gift of grace surpasses every capability of created nature, since it is nothing short of a participation of the divine nature, which exceeds every other nature. Although it is impossible that any creature should cause grace by its own inherent power, yet God has so arranged that all His spiritual gifts are dispensed through the Blessed Virgin. As St. Bernard says: *Nulla gratia venit de caelo ad terram nisi transeat per manus Mariae*: *No grace comes from heaven to earth without passing through the hands of Mary*. The holy Doctors and Fathers of the Church cannot find words sufficient to inculcate this truth. They speak of Mary as being the reservoir of all good: *promptuarium omnium bonorum :* the treasurer of all graces, the treasury

of Jesus Christ, and long before them the angel Gabriel summed it all up in one word: *Gratia plena.* She is full of grace for herself, she is full of grace for us. *Plena sibi, superplena nobis.*

St. Thomas distinguishes a triple fullness of grace. Firstly, *plenitudo sufficientiae :* the fullness of sufficiency common to all the just. That is to say that all the elect receive an abundance of grace, sufficient to enable them to work out their salvation and so attain to eternal beatitude.

Secondly, there is *plenitudo excellentiae :* the fullness of excellence. This appertains to Christ alone. He possesses the fullness of the source, the plenitude of a limitless abyss. By Him we have all been enriched. *De plenitudine ejus nos omnes accepimus :* of His fullness we all have received.[4]

Lastly, there is *plenitudo redundantiae :* the fullness of superabundance. This appertains in a special way to the Blessed Virgin, for the grace which she has received is like a reservoir which overflows and inundates all mankind. Mary is full of grace for herself, she superabounds with grace for us. We can say of her, as we say of her Son, though in a different sense: *De plenitudine ejus nos omnes accepimus.* The graces of the Blessed Virgin have a threefold value: a meritorious value, a satisfactory value, an impetratory value. Her merits, according to several holy Doctors, surpass the merits of the angels and men combined; satisfaction and impetration go hand and hand with merit.

It is clear from this that the spiritual treasures of our august Mother attain to heights and depths which it is impossible for us to comprehend. It is therefore not astonishing that they should overflow and pour themselves into our souls: *plenitudo redundantiae.* Her satisfactory treasures are entirely at our disposal. Since she was exempt from the slightest stain of sin, she had no need to make atonement for herself. Her satisfactions were placed in the treasury of the Church which distributes them to us

[4] John, I, 16.

through indulgences. Her merits are not applied directly to us, they are her own inalienable property. Nevertheless, we can say that Mary is a meritorious cause of grace. Not that she merited salvation for us in the same way as Jesus—in strict justice, but by reason of her close friendship with God, she has wonderful power to move His Heart. But it is more especially with regard to impetration that Mary dispenses all graces. All our spiritual goods reach us only by her intercession. Therefore we see that the words of St. Bernard are not merely a pious exaggeration, but are full of deep meaning.

We must here recall the sublime teaching of St. Paul, when he declares the Church to be a mystical body of which Christ is the head.[5] As in the human body, so also in the Church there are powerful nerves which maintain the different members in unity. These are signified by spiritual authority. There are vessels which support life, namely the Sacraments. Finally there is life itself and the blood of the Church, grace. All movement and energy descend from the head to the other members, and there is a portion of the human body which unites the head with the rest of the body. Christ is head of the Church, Mary is the intermediary which unites the head with the members: *Maria, collum Ecclesiae !* Mary is the mystical neck of the divine body which is the Church. As all movement and energy reach the rest of the body from the head only by going through the neck, so the life of Christ reaches the faithful only by passing through Mary, the supernatural organ which connects the mystical head with members of the body. Grace descends from Christ to the Blessed Virgin; from Mary it descends into our souls; thence it rises once more into eternity from whence it came. Just as blood or water seeks its source, so also does grace. The source of grace is eternity, therefore it rises to eternity from whence it descends according to the words of Our Blessed Lord: *Fiet in eo fons aquæ salientis in vitam aeternam. It shall*

[5] Cor. 12, 27.

become in him a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting.[6] From the soul it rises to Mary, from Mary it passes into Christ, by Christ it finally reaches eternity anew. By means of Mary then, there is a supernatural stream in the Church perpetually rising and descending in turn; there is between heaven and earth, as it were, an ebb and flow. The merits and treasures of Jesus are transmitted to us by the heart of Mary, our merits and love reach Jesus through the heart of His mother. Your heart, O Immaculate Mother, is the sweet rendezvous where God and man meet, the mysterious river which unites the banks of time and eternity.

As the riches of Jesus Christ are applied to us by the Sacraments, so also we may say that the treasures of Mary are applied to us by the Rosary. Where else shall we find the merits and satisfaction of the Blessed Virgin? Is not the Rosary the story of her life? In the Mysteries her satisfactions and her merits grew almost to infinity.

The impetratory power of her prayer corresponds to this degree of merit. When she intercedes for us with her Son, when she asks Him to grant our petition, He remembers what she underwent in the events outlined in the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary and infallibly complies with her desires. Thus by meditation on the Rosary we are brought into contact with the source from whence Mary drew her spiritual riches. As we said when speaking of the soul of Jesus, the Rosary brings us into contact with the soul and grace of the Blessed Virgin, and our soul is enlightened by the rays of her brightness. When we recite the Hail Mary and repeat these words *Gratia Plena,* not only do we recall her joys and her sorrows, but above all we are mindful of the rôle she fulfills in the work of salvation and in the economy of grace, and come to realise her influence with God on our behalf. Our heart and soul are united to hers, we slake our thirst at the same fount, we beseech her, who is the Mother of grace, to have pity on her children and

[6] John, 4, 14.

obtain their requests. To which prayer she graciously replies by these words: *He that shall find me shall find life and shall have salvation from the Lord.*[7]

III MARY, PATRONESS OF A HAPPY DEATH

In the destiny of every Christian there are three outstanding events: his baptism, his first communion, his death. On the day of our baptism God takes possession of our soul; He marks us as His own; He sets His seal upon us and anoints us unto kingship for eternity. On the day of our first communion we have the unspeakable happiness of embracing Jesus for the first time in the Eucharist. The meeting between a child and a long absent parent is no doubt a wonderful joy for both. What then can we say of the first meeting of a child and his God? But of all days, the most solemn and decisive is assuredly the day of our death. On that day a battle is won or lost, a battle which determines our eternal future and puts the seal on our eternal predestination or on our eternal condemnation.

Mary has a part to play in these three great events of our life. She smiles on us at our birth, and, so to speak, holds us in her arms at the moment of baptism. She blesses us on the day of our first communion, and leads us to the banquet of her Son. She shows herself to be our mother in a very special way on that most terrible of days, the day of our death. Holy Scripture speaks of death as being the day of the Lord, *dies Domini.* It may also be called the day of Mary.

Three awful thoughts cross the mind of a dying sinner: the vision of his past life with all its sins; the vision of the future and the inevitable punishment to come; the vision of the present and the divine justice from which he cannot escape. The judgment commences on the death bed. It is

[7] Prov. 8, 35.

the opinion of theologians that man is judged in the actual spot where he dies. Ah! if the day of death were the day of divine justice only, it would too often be a dreadful day. But it is also Mary's day and for that reason it is a day of mercy and rejoicing. To counteract discouragement, Mary places three consoling visions before the eyes of the dying: the thought of the past and all the favours received from her; the vision of Paradise where she reigns as Queen; and even, as has frequently occurred, her presence at death beds. No matter what temptation assails the child of Mary, he is strengthened and consoled by his heavenly Mother.

Mary deserves the title of patroness of a happy death. Firstly, she prevents our being surprised by death, by helping us to lead a Christian life; secondly, she assists us in a very special manner when that dread hour approaches.

To die in the state of grace is a favour which we cannot merit. God alone, absolute master of grace and of death, is able to unite death and the state of grace. The death of the just, then, is the result of a special predestination; the same love of God which gives us life also causes our death; the same act which calls us to glory decrees also that we die at that moment. A child just baptised may by some unforeseen accident fall from the arms of the person who carries it and die in that fall. It may appear fortuitous, but in reality it is all in the designs of God, Who predestines the child by a special grace to die in that hour.

Mary aids her children in a very special manner at the actual moment of death. By assisting at Calvary at the death of the Head of the predestined, according to St. Alphonsus, she obtained the privilege of assisting all other predestined souls in the hour of their last agony. God decreed that His Christ should become incarnate by the co-operation of Mary and that He should die before her eyes; He also decreed that His other Christs should be formed by Mary and that she should receive their last sigh.

It is certainly an awful moment when we await the call

and the judgment of God. The soul is about to appear before its Maker and Judge. Nothing else matters; those around the bed of the dying person are powerless to help any longer. But God is not alone with the soul; the demon and his satellites are also there. Satan, realising how short a time remains to him, makes one last tremendous effort to conquer his victim. And now this is Mary's opportunity. More terrible than an army in battle array, she confronts the enemy of salvation, whom she vanquishes by a single look. As St. Antoninus says: *If Mary is for us, who is against us?*

St. Alphonsus assures us that Mary has been seen assisting at the death bed of her faithful clients, removing the sweat of agony from their faces, refreshing their fevered brows. For such souls death has no horrors, it is a drink which they taste with delight. We even hear of holy souls, like the pious Suarez and a saintly Dominican soul, crying out in a transport of joy: *Ah! I did not know it was so sweet to die.* Mary watches over her children like a tender and loving mother, they sleep the sleep of the just, they die in the embrace of the Lord.

We are told in the life of St. Clare that the Blessed Virgin appeared at her death-bed, accompanied by a band of virgins. She lovingly embraced the dying saint, and gave her the kiss of peace, while the virgins surrounding the bed covered her with a cloth of gold.

It is customary in the order of St. Dominic to sing the Salve Regina at the death bed of its members, and on more than one occasion during the singing of this antiphon the dying religious suddenly smiled sweetly, and then slept peacefully in the Lord, cradled as it were in the arms of Mary.

We know not what death God has reserved for us; but this we do know: that, if we continue to the end as faithful servants of Mary, our last moment will certainly be made easy for us. Our mother will sweeten the bitterness of that

hour, our last day in truth be a blessed day, *dies Mariae: the day of Mary.*

These thoughts have not brought us away from the consideration of the Rosary, for in the Mysteries we see Mary entering upon her office of patroness of a happy death; she assists her glorious spouse, St. Joseph, in his agony; later on she assists the King of the Elect. The Master of life assuredly has no need of succour, but He wishes, nevertheless, that the presence of His mother should assuage the sufferings of His cruel sacrifice. The Rosary then recalls to our mind the death of Jesus, the death of Mary, the death of Joseph.

Meditation on the agony of Jesus will strengthen us against the attacks of the demon when our own agony draws nigh. Whilst meditating on the Mysteries of the Crucifixion and Assumption we can unite our disposition to those of Jesus and Mary, and we may be sure the King and Queen of the elect will favour us with very special graces when our own time comes. Let us not forget while reciting these two Mysteries to ask for the grace of final perseverance. They are pre-eminently the Mysteries associated with a happy death. But each one of the fifteen Mysteries will surely obtain for us this grace of graces, for each time we say the Ave Maria and the words *Pray for us now and at the hour of our death*, do we not repeatedly implore her assistance in our last agony? We can rest assured that Mary will not fail to come to our aid; she will succour the members of her guard of honour and, if necessary, obtain pardon of their sins for them. The Rosary is truly the school wherein we can learn to die well; whosoever is faithful to it will be able to look death fearlessly in the face.

The following incident is related in the life of St. Dominic by several trustworthy authors. Through the efforts of the saint a certain young man was enrolled in the Confraternity of the Rosary. Shortly afterwards, his death occurred suddenly and his body was thrown into a pit. On hearing the tragic news Dominic hastened to the edge of

the pit and in a loud voice called the dead man by name. He came forth alive, confessed his sins with devotion and contrition and lived for two days longer. He replied that he would certainly have been damned, had not the merits of the Rosary obtained for him the grace of perfect contrition.

This story may or may not be true, but it gives us some idea of the manner in which Mary performs her office of patroness of a happy death by means of the Rosary. The glories of Mary and the glories of the Rosary are inseparably united.

We have said that the question of salvation may be summed up in three words: predestination, grace, death. The part played here by Mary may also be resumed in three words. She is the model of the predestined, she is mediatrix of all grace, she is the patroness of a happy death. Again three words sum up the part played by the Rosary in this matter: it helps us to imitate the model of our predestination, it communicates to us the graces which God has given into the hands of the Blessed Virgin, it obtains for us the grace of a happy death.

By means of this devotion we assign to our Blessed Lady her true place in the divine plan. Notwithstanding what has been said to the contrary by the innovators of the sixteenth century and the rationalists of later times, the Rosary is one of the principal devotions of Christianity and a sure means of attaining to sanctity.

IV THE ROSARY AND ST. JOSEPH

On the very first page of the Gospel the Holy Spirit has inscribed three names. This page of Holy Writ is frequently chanted by the ministers of the Church at her altars. *Cum esset desponsata mater Jesu, Maria, Joseph: When Mary the mother of Jesus was espoused to Joseph.* While the Church exists, these three names will be inseparably

united and unceasingly repeated. God has written these three names in the book of life, so that we might inscribe them in our hearts and affections.

In the Rosary the remembrance of Joseph is indissolubly united to that of Jesus and Mary. The Rosary reveals Mary and her Son, but it also reveals her spouse, St. Joseph. In fact it may be called the life story of Joseph, because in the first place it helps us to realise the part played by the Holy Patriarch in the Incarnation and Redemption, and secondly his position with regard to the Church.

The world was created by a Virgin Trinity, the world was redeemed by a Virgin Trinity. The Virgin Trinity which created us, we invoke at the commencement of all our actions: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Virgin Trinity which redeemed the world is Jesus, Mary and Joseph, whom from our childhood we have learned to know and to love. Jesus is Redeemer, Mary is Mother of the Redeemer, Joseph is united to both by the closest bonds. All three are virgins; together they form one family. The sufferings and joys of one are the sufferings and joys of all. We may say of them what we say of the heavenly Trinity, though in a different sense, *Et hi tres unum sunt: And these three are one.*

Joseph had real authority over Jesus and Mary. In earthly marriages the wife belongs to the husband; there is between them a total donation, one to the other. The union between Mary and Joseph was spiritual and for that reason it was all the more real and sacred; it was a perfect union, a complete donation. Mary belonged completely to Joseph.

Consequently, Jesus became the property of Joseph. St. Francis de Sales has a very ingenious comparison which we borrow to illustrate our point. If a bird drops a fruit into a garden, the tree springing up from the seed undoubtedly belongs to the owner of the garden. Mary was the garden of St. Joseph, wherein the Holy Spirit placed the divine fruit, a fruit which became a great tree which healed and sheltered the whole human race. O blessed art thou, Holy

Patriarch, God's master. Beauty and grace belonged entirely to thee.

In creating Jesus and Mary, the Almighty had, so to speak, to move heaven and earth, according to the word of the prophet: *Commovebo caelum et terram.*[8] Eternity itself was roused by the accomplishment of this great marvel, which has been called the *Negotium saeculorum: the task of the ages.* And when God gave being to these two elect ones, He gave them into the keeping of St. Joseph who henceforth could say of Jesus and Mary: *You are mine.* Both could answer in reply: *Yes; we are yours.*

On account of his wonderful dignity as husband of Mary and foster-father of her child, it was necessary for him to be endowed with very special graces and virtues. St. John Chrysostom, echoing the ancient traditional teaching, assures us that Joseph was cleansed before his birth from all stain of original sin. And his daily contact with the Word Incarnate must certainly have led to an unspeakable increase of grace in his soul.

We shall recall here one of the axioms of St. Thomas, to which reference has been made already: the nearer anything approaches its source, the more fully it partakes of the properties of that source. Thus the light that is nearest to the sun is the most dazzling; the heat that is nearest to the fire is the most intense, and the water that is nearest to the fountain is the purest. But, after Mary, who came into closer contact with the Humanity of the Word than did Joseph? When he held Jesus in his arms and embraced Him, did he not drink from the very source of holiness? The Humanity of Christ, the ocean of grace, filled his soul with grace even to overflowing. Again, his close intimacy with Mary of itself served to sanctify her spouse. In the Mystery of the Incarnation, the grace bestowed by God on Jesus, Mary and Joseph is something absolutely beyond our comprehension.

[8] Agg., 2, 7.

We borrow another comparison from St. Francis de Sales. Suppose a mirror is so placed that it directly recieves the rays of the sun, while opposite to this mirror is placed another. The second mirror receives the rays of the sun only reflected, still they are perfectly reflected. Mary is the mirror which directly receives the rays of the sun of justice. Joseph is the mirror which receives these rays from Mary. Thus, the splendours of Christ and of Mary are reflected in the soul of Joseph. Such is his incomparable holiness.

This rôle of Joseph in the Incarnation, as spouse of Mary and foster-father of Jesus, is revealed to us admirably by the Joyful Mysteries. In the Annunciation and Visitation we can picture him as the spouse of the Immaculate Virgin; in the three last Mysteries he is outstanding as the foster-father of the Divine Child. By meditating on these mysteries we learn something of the interior sanctity of the glorious Patriarch. In fact, his life story may be contemplated in the seven joys and seven sorrows revealed therein.

But the remembrance of the Holy Patriarch is not absent in the Sorrowful Mysteries. After the Crucifixion of the Saviour, the soul of the Word descended into Limbo, where the souls of Jesus and Joseph were once more re-united; for it is the teaching of St. Thomas that our Redeemer then bestowed the Beatific Vision on the souls of the just detained in Limbo. What ineffable bliss was theirs in that moment, when they beheld their God face to face. Let us ask of St. Joseph that we too may one day experience the same happiness.

In the Glorious Mysteries we again meet the venerable Patriarch. He was, without doubt, among the number of privileged souls who accompanied the soul of Christ on the morning of the Resurrection. The triumph of Jesus was also the triumph of Joseph. On Ascension Thursday the foster-father rose gloriously with his Son. Now that our Saviour sits on His throne as King and as Judge, He confides the care of His Church to him, to whose care He also was confided during His life here on earth. In congratulating Our

Saviour on His glorious entrance into heaven, let us congratulate Joseph who was associated with Him. When we meditate in the last Mysteries on the glories of Mary, we can also recall Joseph's part therein. In offering our praise and homage to the Queen of the Church, let us not forget her spouse, who is its patron and protector. The Glorious Mysteries, therefore, reveal to us the influence exercised by Joseph over the universal Church.

The Church was instituted primarily for the purpose of perpetuating the Incarnation down the centuries. The Church is the necessary extension and prolongation of the Incarnation. The Christian family is the continuation of the family at Nazareth. Therefore Joseph's position with regard to the Church and the Christian family must be analogous to the part played by him in the Mystery of the Incarnation. He was guardian and protector of the Holy Family at Nazareth, he is now guardian and protector of Christendom. The Church has solemnly acknowledged this office of the Holy Patriarch. We may mention here that a Dominican religious, Fr. Lataste, offered his life for the intention that St. Joseph might be declared Patron of the Church; the sacrifice and death of the generous victim were accepted, and shortly afterwards the decree of Pope Pius IX declared St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church. St. Joseph, then, is Patron of the Universal Church which means that as our intercessor he can obtain every grace and favour for us in whatever state of life we may be placed.

We all know the celebrated words of St. Teresa: *The Most High grants favours to His Saints to succour us in particular cases only; but I know from experience that St. Joseph has the power of helping everyone, without exception, in afflictions and trials of every kind.* We have shown how all our spiritual goods come to us through Jesus and Mary: from Jesus, the source and fountain of grace; from Mary, the channel through which they flow. But Joseph has certain rights over these two. The bonds which formerly united the Holy Family on earth are not destroyed but

rather consecrated in Heaven. *You are mine;* and both can still answer: *yes, we are yours.* Therefore he is able, in a sense, to command them. But Jesus and Mary do not wait to hear his request; they anticipate his wishes and all the favours he desires for his privileged children are immediately granted.

By reason of his influence with the King and Queen of Heaven, Joseph may be called the chancellor of the divine finances, the distributor of God's treasures, both spiritual and temporal. A religious Community in America invoked the intercession of St. Joseph to obtain a sum of money necessary for the building of an establishment for the relief of the poor. One of the Sisters composed a hymn in honour of the saint which the old people sang each evening at night prayers. At the end of the novena they received a generous sum of money from a benefactor; and inspired with greater confidence they continued their prayers until finally the saint graciously obtained for them double the required amount.

A Christian family threatened with an unjust lawsuit made a novena to St. Joseph, at the end of which the plaintiff himself came forward offering to stop the proceedings and defray all the costs.

But it is above all as our intercessor in spiritual matters that Joseph shows himself to be our powerful advocate. How many grateful mothers attribute the conversion of a husband or a son to the venerable Patriarch?

Final perseverance and the grace of a happy death is assuredly the grace of graces. The most dreadful of thoughts is the reflection: shall I be saved, shall I be damned? We cannot say; but Joseph, who breathed his last breath in the arms of Jesus and Mary, will obtain this grace of graces for his devoted clients.

The following story used to be related by St. Vincent Ferrer. A pious merchant was accustomed to entertain once a year three poor people in honour of the Holy Family at Nazareth. When his last hour drew nigh, Jesus, Mary and

Joseph appeared at his death bed and saluted him with these words of love: *During your life you received us yearly into your dwelling, to-day we will receive you into our heavenly home.* Would that we should receive such an invitation in the hour of agony. Let us not fail to ask from St. Joseph the gift of final perseverance.

St. Joseph, then, is protector, friend and model of people of every condition and every state of life, in all their difficulties. He, who sheltered the Infant Jesus under his mantle, is the patron of childhood. He, who worked as a carpenter, is the patron saint of the working classes. The head of the Holy Family at Nazareth is the patron of all Christian families throughout the world. He is the exemplar of virgins; he was espoused to a virgin mother, and was foster-father to a virgin God. He, who led Jesus to men and defended Him against the attacks of His enemies, is the patron of priests who also have this mission entrusted to them. Joseph tasted the cup of bitterness during his life and is patron of the afflicted, the sorrowing and the suffering. He is patron of exiles having once being forced to fly from his own native land.

Since this, in brief, is the mission which Jesus Christ confided to His foster-father on Ascension Day, we see how meditation on the Rosary can truly be a meditation on St. Joseph.

Leo XIII rightly understood that the guardian of the Holy Family must necessarily enter into the Mysteries of the Rosary and for that reason decreed that during the month of October, Joseph, the spouse of Mary, should be invoked immediately after the Immaculate Virgin and a prayer in honour of St. Joseph be added to the end of the Rosary.

Let us not separate those whom God has united. In future, when reciting the Rosary, let us unite in our minds and hearts the three names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

PART III

THE ROSARY AND THE PRACTICE OF HOLINESS.

I THE ROSARY A SOURCE OF HOLINESS

God wills that we should be perfect even as He is perfect. For, says the Apostle, God hath not called us unto uncleanness but unto sanctification. A Christian is one who is consecrated, set apart. At our very entrance into the world the Church sanctifies us by the Sacrament of regeneration, Baptism. When the hour of our departure draws nigh she anoints us by the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. By Baptism she prepares us for our sojourn here on earth; by Extreme Unction she prepares us for our journey into eternity. Even after our death she blesses our dust in the tomb, mindful of the fact that this dust will one day rise gloriously unto the inheritance of eternal glory. There is then a complete consecration which extends over the whole life of every Christian, which preserves us from the contagion of the world and makes us the chosen ones of the Lord.

The Church blesses us in a very special way when we come to make a choice of a state in life. To souls called to the cloister, virgins and monks, she gives the necessary graces to remain faithful to their vocation; she softens the trials and difficulties of the religious life. She anoints her priests on the day of their ordination. Strengthened by this, they go confidently through the world. She also blesses Christian marriage, praying that the union may be lasting and happy. She pours into the hearts of Christian spouses a little of that charity with which Christ cherishes His Church.

Every Christian is called to holiness, we are *Sancti Domino*: *holy unto the Lord.* However we have been speaking only of an exterior holiness, whereas holiness, properly so called, is a participation in the very being of God, a state of soul which unites us so intimately to Our

Lord, that we are animated solely by His spirit and love. A saint is one who is able to say: *I live, now not I, but Jesus lives in me.*

We shall endeavour to show how the Rosary communicates to us this holiness which is the very life of God. In the human body the head and heart are the two principal organs which sustain life. In the Church also there is a head from which descend all supernatural energies; there is a heart which circulates these divine energies throughout the body. The head of the Church is Jesus Christ, its heart is the Holy Spirit.

St. Thomas remarks that Christ is called the head of the Church from a likeness with the human head, in which we may consider three things:—order, perfection and power: order, for the head is the first part of the man, beginning from above; perfection, in as much as in the head dwell all the senses, both interior and exterior, whereas in the other members there is only touch; power, because the power and movement of the other members, together with direction in their acts, comes from the head, by reason of the intellectual and motivating power ruling there.

Now these three things belong spiritually to Christ. Firstly, on account of His nearness to God, His grace is the highest. All have received grace only on account of His grace. Secondly, He had perfection in the fulness of all graces, according to the words of St. John: *We saw Him full of grace and truth.*[1] Thirdly, He has the power of bestowing grace on all the members of the Church, according to the words of the same Evangelist: *Of His fulness we have all received.*[2]

The head has a manifest pre-eminence over the other exterior members, therefore, Christ is likened to the head by reason of His visible humanity. The Holy Spirit, on the contrary, is likened to the heart, since the heart has a certain hidden influence, He invisibly quickens and unifies the

[1] John, I. 15.
[2] John, I. 16.

Church. The Divine Paraclete exercises over the Church a secret but irresistible influence. He maintains her life, ardour, beauty, perpetual youth; He consoles and fortifies her. He is, as it were, an impetuous river which waters and enlivens the city of God. He is the mysterious, yet all powerful, heart which casts forth life and grace.

This, then, is the economy of the supernatural life. In order to obtain salvation and to advance in perfection, we must be united to the head and to the heart of the Church, to Christ and to the Holy Spirit.

Now the Rosary is a sweet union with both. During our meditation on the fifteen Mysteries we are brought into contact with the adorable person of Jesus Christ. He passes before our mind's eye. We meditate on His life and His actions with their infinite virtue; we can penetrate even to His soul and divinity. Our Divine Head will communicate to us His life, so that we can feel and say that we now have a living soul. *Factus est homo in animam viventem: Man became a living soul.*[3] In each Mystery, also, we can perceive the operation of the Holy Spirit. It was He Who caused the Immaculate Virgin to conceive, He Who made John the Baptist leap in his mother's womb, He Who transformed Elizabeth and Zachary. It was He Who directed the whole course of the Passion of Jesus. It was He Who finally animates the Glorious Mysteries.

The Holy Spirit is truly the power and the heart of each Mystery. If we sincerely desire to enter into the real depths of this devotion, the Holy Spirit will, as it were, fill us with His own heart to such a degree as will enable us to reach eternal glory hereafter.

We see, then, how the Rosary unites us with the head and the heart of the Church, with Christ and with the Holy Spirit. And where the Son and the Paraclete are, there also is the Father. Therefore, we are in the company of the most adorable and lovable Trinity, the very source of life, love, holiness and happiness. What precious moments!

[3] Genes, 2, 7.

II THE ROSARY AND ORDINARY HOLINESS

In order better to appreciate the influence which the Rosary excercises over our spiritual life, we must consider the three degrees of holiness: ordinary holiness, perfect holiness, and heroic holiness. Ordinary holiness consists in the observance of the commandments and precepts by a soul in the state of grace. It is the first degree of charity, it is that wedding garment without which we cannot be present at the banquet of the father of the household.

To attain to this first degree in the spiritual life, it is not necessary to perform extraordinary actions, or even a multiplicity of actions. The Rosary will make this clear for the simplest minds. Jesus Christ, our model, Who is holiness itself, did nothing but the most ordinary actions during His life at Nazareth and these He did in a quiet, unobstrusive way. Mary and Joseph, next to Jesus our models in the way of perfection, led a hidden and obscure life. Therefore, holiness does not consist in the accomplishment of wonderful and glorious deeds. To work and to suffer is the necessary condition of man's existence here on earth. Holiness consists in knowing how to work and how to suffer.

The Rosary is the true school of labour and suffering. In the Joyful Mysteries we contemplate the little home at Nazareth. There we find a workshop, a carpenter and his Assistant. It is almost incomprehensible. The Son of the Eternal Father does not wish to reign on a throne or to dwell in a palace, but to become a humble artisan and to be called a workman. The Jews said of Him: *Nonne hic est fabri filius?*: *Is not this the carpenter's son?*[4] *Nonne hic est fabrus, filius Mariae?*: *Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary?*[5] Ah! if the Christian labourer would only

[4] Matthew, 13, 55.
[5] Mark, 6. 3.

learn from these great lessons he would say to the rich ones of this world: I do not envy you your wealth because God Himself thought nothing of it and became a poor workman like me, toiling all day and earning His bread by the sweat of His brow. If both employer and employee would only remember the relations which existed between Jesus and Joseph the social problem would quickly be solved, and peace and happiness would soon be restored to firesides now grown desolate. If the lessons to be learned from the Rosary were put into practice, every workshop would resemble the home at Nazareth, gladness would enter into every family, the golden age of the world would return, because holiness would be practised by all.

The Sorrowful Mysteries teach us how to sanctify our sufferings. One who meditates rightly on the Rosary dares not complain of his lot. You may be overcome by fatigue, covered with perspiration, but did you ever, like Jesus Christ, sweat even unto blood? Your body is writhing in pain; but had you ever to endure the torture of scourging? Your mind is troubled with anxiety; but had you ever to wear a bloody crown of thorns? Did thorns ever pierce your forehead, were your eyes ever filled with blood, as were those of Jesus? Your shoulders are bent under heavy burdens; but had you ever to bear the heavy weight of a cross as Jesus did on the way to Golgotha? Your hands and feet are weary with labouring; but were they ever pierced by terrible nails which broke every fibre and nerve? Your soul is desolate and lonely; but did such an abyss of anguish ever descend on your soul such as forced this cry of agony from Our Redeemer: *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?* Oh no, a soul meditating wisely on the Rosary will not dare to lament and complain.

Sometimes we hear people saying: I would not mind if I deserved this suffering. But did Our Redeemer deserve His agony, His scourging, His crucifixion? We are blessed if we suffer without having deserved our suffering. A trial is only a chastisement which we justly merit. Suffering

which we have not deserved is a proof of God's love of us, it is His special way of showing His care for us.

We cannot estimate the injury we do ourselves by refusing the cross. Suffering, say the holy Doctors, does a threefold work in the soul: it expiates, it impetrates, it sanctifies. Nothing purifies the soul like suffering supernaturally borne; it is a most efficacious means of enduring our purgatory here on earth. All you, then, who suffer and labour, rejoice! You are on Calvary, but you are very near to heaven, to God. God can refuse no request to a soul who offers to Him its sufferings with resignation. There is no beauty here below comparable to that of a soul transfigured by suffering. Christian suffering, accepted in a right spirit, detaches us from the earth, elevates us to heaven, makes us participate a little in the beauty of Christ Crucified. This, then, should be the outlook on suffering of a person who has meditated on suffering in the school of the Rosary. He will find Jesus in every sorrow, and will cry out with the Psalmist: *Calix meus inebrians quam praeclarus est*! *My chalice which inebriated me, how goodly is it!*[6]

Holiness, therefore, is within the reach of everyone. All we have to do is to model our actions on each of the actions of Our Blessed Lord as portrayed for us by the Mysteries of the Rosary. If we suffer physically let us unite ourselves to the Word Incarnate, as He was scourged at the pillar. If we suffer mentally, let us endeavour to bear it in the same spirit as He endured the Agony in the Garden and the Crowning with Thorns. When we are tempted to impatience, let us remember the meek Lamb of God who carried His cross to Calvary. In prayer let us unite ourselves to Him, Who says we ought always to pray. In our study let us reflect on the infinite knowledge of Wisdom Incarnate, Who revealed Himself to the doctors in the Temple. Children of Mary, Knights of her Guard of Honour, the Kingdom of God is truly within you. You can become

[6] Ps., 22, 5.

saints without working miracles or doing extraordinary deeds. Your Rosary is the secret of perfection.

You men of sorrow and labour, meditate on the Joyful Mysteries. Remember you are working for an eternal inheritance; unite yourselves with the Carpenter of Nazareth, and ask Jesus, Who was a workman like you, to lighten a little the weight of your burden. You learned men, who devote yourselves to study, stop for an instant and raise your thoughts to heaven. Both body and mind will find renewed energy and courage after repeating this simple prayer: *Our Father, who art in heaven, I offer you my fatigue, my weariness, my suffering, my study.* Work thus accomplished will be blessed and made fruitful by God; each evening you will be able to say: to-day we have amassed treasures for heaven, more splendid than any this world can produce. If your path in life is a thorny one, if you are more frequently on Calvary than on Thabor, enter into the spirit of the Sorrowful Mysteries, unite yourself with the God of Gethsemani and Golgotha, offer your tears, your love, your very blood, to Him who redeemed the world.

Lastly, if your life is free from sorrow or suffering, you have great need of the Rosary for you are exposed to great dangers. Remember we are only wayfarers on this earth, we have not here a lasting city, but look for one that is to come. The Glorious Mysteries will remind you of your future life and destiny, they will urge you not to be led astray by the false pleasures of this world. The very first Mystery, in recalling the glorious triumph of Our Saviour, will also make us mindful of the Resurrection of the Dead: that terrible and solemn day when the Angel of the Lord will stand upon the ruins of the world and cry out: *Tempus non erit amplius. Time shall be no longer.*[7]

St. Jerome, in the solitude of the desert, used to imagine that he heard the call of the last trumpet summoning the dead to judgment. Meditation on the Glorious Mysteries

[7] Apoc., 10, 6.

will produce the same salutary effect in us. If we live in the midst of pomp and wealth, let us reflect that all this worldly vanity will one day come to an end; we are here one day and gone the next.

The Rosary, then, will help us to sanctify riches and pleasures if we possess them, as it likewise helps us to sanctify suffering and labour, if such is God's will for us. The working classes can recall the home at Nazareth; the afflicted can remember Golgotha; the rich ones of this world can remember that all things pass, that the mocking brightness of earthly show will melt away as morning shadows before the rising glory of the Sun of Justice, shining on the elect in the day of triumph.

III THE ROSARY AND PERFECT HOLINESS

Ordinary holiness is necessary if we wish to attain eternal salvation, but there is a higher degree of holiness, which, although not the highest, may be called the perfection of love in the perfection of sacrifice. This is the holiness aimed at in the religious life.

By virtue of their religious profession, consecrated souls are bound to aspire to perfection. God the Father must be able to recognise His Son in each one of them; Mary must be able to see clearly in their souls the sweetness, charity, humility and spirit of renunciation of Jesus. But to arrive at this stage they must labour unceasingly at the work of their sanctification, and even after the efforts of a lifetime their ideal will still not be realised, because their model is Infinite Perfection itself.

The religious life, then, is a continual advance towards perfection. But in what does this perfection consist? When we read the lives of saintly, worthy religious we see that they paid to the Church the tribute of heroism, just as the holy martyrs pay the tribute of their blood. Profession

creates within the soul an ardent desire for perfection, makes it aspire even to heroism; more than once, submission and obedience have reached a heroic degree.

Nevertheless, the holiness ordinarily demanded of religious is not heroic charity; it is charity of a lower degree than heroic charity, but higher than the charity expected from Christians in general. It consists in the removal of all those obstacles which hinder in any way the operations of divine love in the soul. It is a species of perfect charity, or, as we have already said, the perfection of love in the perfection of sacrifice. Our Redeemer showed His love for us by sacrificing Himself for our sakes, we must also prove our love for Him by death and sacrifice. We sacrifice and put to death our wordly ambitions and possessions by the vow of poverty; we sacrifice and put to death the flesh and the senses by the vow of chastity; we sacrifice and put to death our will by the vow of obedience. When the heart and soul are immolated, when the will—free will, that most dear possession, the inheritance of even the most lowly of the sons of men—is entirely abandoned to God, then we have the perfection of love in the perfection of sacrifice. A religious who is faithful to his three vows already has this perfect charity which is bordering on heroism.

In order to be faithful it is not sufficient merely to avoid mortal sin. No doubt, as long as a soul avoids serious faults it is still, in a sense, in the state of perfection. But in order fully to respond to Him Who calls us to perfection, the souls must have a deadly hatred of venial sin. One who commits deliberate venial faults wounds our Blessed Lord in that which is very dear to His heart. He cannot be said to be in the state of perfection of love in the perfection of sacrifice. It is evident that detestation of venial sin must go hand in hand with a sincere desire of perfection. All progress in perfection consists in lessening venial faults; each time we commit a deliberate venial fault we fall a degree, on to a lower level from these radiant heights towards which a true religious soars. A soul, therefore, that

is seriously desirous of perfection must be determined to avoid as far as possible all deliberate venial sin. We say *deliberate* because it is the teaching of the Church that it is impossible, save by a singular privilege such as was granted to Our Blessed Lady, to avoid all indeliberate faults. Again, we do not take a vow to be perfect, but only to strive after perfection. We are not hypocrites or liars if we still have our faults in the religious state, but only if we renounce our desire for the attainment of perfection.

The holiness required of a religious may be resumed in these few words: the perfection of love in the perfection of sacrifice, which supposes fidelity to our three vows, together with an intense hatred and horror of deliberate venial sin.

The great secret of progress in the way of perfection is to keep very close to Jesus, united to Him. If we are guided by His inspirations, if we leave ourselves completely in His hands, then we shall run with Him in the royal way, we shall be able to exclaim with the Psalmist: *Exultavit ut gigas ad currendam viam. He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way.*[8]

The Rosary can help us in a very special manner to reach our goal. Jesus in the Rosary is our model, our way, and our life. He is our model, because He was the first and most perfect religious of His Heavenly Father. He is our way; He stretches forth His all-powerful hand to sustain and support us; He is our life, because meditation on the Mysteries results in marvellous graces being poured into our souls to aid us in the observance of our vows.

Our Blessed Lord in the Rosary is the religious par excellence of the Eternal Father. A religious is one who is entirely bound to God. In fact, the word religion is derived from *religare,* which means to bind a second time. Every human being is bound to God by the very fact that all depend on Him for their creation and preservation. Without Him they could not exist for an instant.

[8] Ps., 18, 6.

We add a moral and voluntary bond to this necessary physical bond. God is our first principle, we adhere to Him by the bond of adoration. God is our sovereign master, we bind ourselves to Him by submission and obedience. God is our last end, we unite ourselves to Him by the bond of love. Religion is the link which binds us a second time to God, our Redeemer and our first principle. St. Thomas says that the term *religious* may be applied in this wide sense to all who serve God; but it usually reserved for those who consecrate their whole lives to the divine service, disengaging themselves completely from wordly affairs and attaching themselves to God in a very special way by their three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Poverty binds them to the source of all good; chastity to a Virgin God, the source of beauty and purity; obedience to God, the sovereign master of all liberty. Thus, in every possible way is a religious bound to God.

In the Mysteries of the Rosary, we can consider the absolute submission of Jesus Christ to the will of the Father. In the Incarnation we see our adorable Saviour coming forth from the bosom of the Father, assuming our frail human nature, making Himself entirely dependent on God, constituting Himself, as it were, His vassal. *Behold I come,* He says, *to do thy will, O God*: *Ecce venio ut faciam voluntatem tuam.*[9] When about to return to that eternal abode whence He came, He uttered the selfsame words: *Fiat voluntas tua.* This one thought was the dominating factor of His whole existence here below. When He remained behind in Jerusalem, separating Himself from Mary and Joseph, it was that He might be about His Father's business; when He passed entire nights in ardent prayer, it was to fulfil the will of Him Who sent Him. Every instant of His life was spent in carrying out the mission entrusted to Him, until at its close He could say to His Father: *Opus consummavi quod dedist mihi ut faciam. I have finished the work which Thou gavest to Me*

[9] Heb., 10, 9.

to do.[10] He was the type of the perfect religious, one who is consecrated entirely and completely to God.

Jesus practised poverty even to heroism: He was born in the midst of poverty and felt its pangs during the whole of His life. He had not whereon to lay His head. On Calvary His garments were taken from Him and divided among the soldiers. He is still poor for unto this day He dwells in the Eucharist, where He despoils Himself of even the appearance of humanity and dons the borrowed clothing of the sacramental species.

With regard to chastity, Jesus is a Virgin God, son of a virgin Mother, spouse of a virgin Church. He willed His body to be laid, after death, in a sepulchre which was not already the resting place of any man; He still dwells in the Blessed Sacrament, the pure wheat of His chosen ones, the wine which gives birth to virgins.

For obedience He had a passionate love. Out of love for obedience He became incarnate, lived and died; He remains in the Eucharist, even allowing Himself sometimes to be desecrated by sacrilegious and sinful hands.

So it is with all the Mysteries. Our Redeemer is the model for all religious when He says: *I have given you an example that as I have done, so do you also.*[11]

But He did not content Himself with simply showing us the way. He is our way and our life. Meditation on the Mysteries of the Rosary has a wonderful efficacy for communicating to us the graces of our vocation. Our three vows are a solemn challenge to the three great concupiscences of the world. But Our Saviour triumphed over this triple power of the evil spirit by His life, passion and resurrection which we recall in the fifteen Mysteries. He Himself was never under the sway of the demon or hell; it was for us that He triumphed over sin; for our sakes He expiated those vices which originate in us from this triple root; for our sakes He merited the graces of the virtues. When we

[10] John, 17, 4.
[11] John, 13, 15.

meditate on the Rosary, then, we actually assist at the victory of Our Saviour over the three concupiscences. As a result of this meditation holy souls will obtain from their contact with the Word Incarnate actual graces which will help them to destroy vices. By uniting ourselves with Jesus in His poverty in the different mysteries, we obtain grace to conquer the concupiscence of the eyes; our contact with Jesus, Who is purity itself, will help to triumph over the concupiscence of the flesh; our humble obedience, modelled on His, will destroy in us the pride of life. In this fashion, the observance of our vows will become easy, the contrary temptations will be overcome.

We have seen that religious perfection does not consist in merely avoiding mortal sin, there must also be an intense hatred and horror of the slightest venial fault. The Rosary can obtain this grace for us. Not only will it strengthen us in moments when the life of the soul is in peril, but its influence extends also to those daily innumerable little struggles which the soul undergoes: the combat between our lower and higher natures, between renunciation and tepidity. In the Rosary we can contemplate on Jesus, the exemplar of all religious, perfect from His very birth. By thus uniting ourselves to Him, we surely receive a little of His admirable perfection. We learn to forget ourselves and to think only of our Well-Beloved and His interests. We have a holy horror of offending Him even in the slightest degree; the more we detach ourselves from ourselves and created things, the more are we attracted towards fervour and love in the divine service.

These are some of the wonderful effects of meditating wisely on the Rosary. But we must be vigilant. If we neglect to respond to the inspiration of Jesus when He draws nigh, He will pass by and we shall be left to pursue our journey to eternity alone. The way is long and difficult, it is easy to become discouraged and turn back.

In such moments we can always have recourse to Mary. Mary in the Rosary knows from experience all the trials and

troubles of a religious. She practised in those Mysteries poverty, chastity and obedience, with perfection such as excluded even the faintest shadow of venial sin. If we unite ourselves to her in her celestial Psalter, the Mediatrix of All Grace will obtain grace for us to imitate her perfection, her love of God, her detestation of sin. Aided by Mary, we shall endeavour to reach Jesus and the good Master, for the sake of His mother, will take compassion on us and will deign to draw near to us again. Hence, we shall arrive safely in eternity in the company of Jesus and Mary.

If religious only realised the wealth and treasures hidden in the Mysteries of the Rosary, how easy would become the way of perfection for them! Supported by the hands of Jesus and Mary, that is by the graces which proceed from both, they would be able to repeat these words of Brother Marie Raphael, O.P.: *I have found in my Rosary the secret of holiness.*

IV THE ROSARY AND HEROIC HOLINESS

The degree of charity demanded of religious constitutes a sort of perfect charity. However, the fecundity of the Church is not exhausted. Nature has exhausted all her energies, grace itself seems to have reached its zeniths, when suddenly it surpasses itself in such a way that the human seems to disappear, only the divine stands out. This is heroism.

Heroism is a sort of mean between the human and the divine, or rather it is humanity transformed by the divinity. This heroism, as St. Thomas says, renders certain men divine: *Secundum quam dicuntur aliqui divini viri.*[12] This is the climax of sanctity.

The whole life of the Church is, as it were, formed of heroism from the days of the first martyrs down to the time

[12] S.T. I. II, Q. 68, art. I, adl.

of modern missionaries. Twelve million martyrs! This is surely the triumph of holiness. Paganism and hell reap their harvest too, they also have their victims, but the Church reaps a harvest of heroism. Every century has re-echoed the glorious cry of the first centuries. A hero is one who subdues nature so completely that every other love is sacrificed for the love of Jesus Christ. Every epoch has witnessed this prodigy. We see young souls sacrificing that filial love and devotion which they owe their parents in order to follow a persecuted Christ, and sometimes to die for Him. The first separation of a child from the home and happiness of its childhood is truly a wrench, but the love of the Saviour makes heroes of His followers. Again, we see maternal affection which, so to speak, lives on sacrifices and devotedness, immolating its offspring generously and willingly for the love of Jesus. We are told of a mother about to be martyred, who led her child with her to martyrdom. Exhorting the child to remain steadfast to the faith she whispered words of encouragement in its ear: *Because I love you, my child, and you love me, I offer you to Jesus as a victim. Come, my child, and die.* The mother and child marched joyously forward to death which united them in a happy embrace for eternity.

From the commencement of the Church down to our own days there have been souls so passionately in love that they gave their very blood and life itself. It was truly heroism which filled the great soul of St. Paul, when he wished to be anathema for his brethren. It was heroism which impelled the apostle of the poor, St. Vincent de Paul, to call out to the rich ladies of Paris for alms with which to clothe and feed his abandoned poor.

Heroism engenders in the soul a Christ-like love of our enemies. It has urged the saints to kiss the bloody hand of the murderers of their kinfolk; it caused Saint Grignion de Montfort to utter this cry: *O my God, take my life, but pardon my enemies.*

Heroic souls are still to be found in our own days, and

ever will be found. While misery and distress exist in the world to be relieved, we shall find hearts overflowing with love, souls ready and willing to pour out their blood.

We, who feel ourselves unworthy to be named brethren of the saints, must never forget that every Christian, in certain circumstances, may be called to heroism. Baptism, by creating noble aspirations in the soul, imposes grave obligations on us. There may arise in our lives occasions, combats, struggles, when ordinary holiness will not suffice for us to triumph, nothing less than heroism will do. But the just are not taken by surprise at such moments; they are ready for the combat. In reality, every soul in the state of grace possesses the germs, the seeds of heroism, the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. According to St. Thomas, the gifts do not, in fact, differ from heroism; they are the seed, heroism is the flower. In some souls the seeds never blossom forth into flower, but it is within the power of every soul to do so. All that is needed is a ray of the sun to open the bud; and this ray is the impulse of the Holy Spirit, which at once overwhelms us and leads us to sublimity.

Humility cannot conceal this truth from us. Contemptible beings as we are, it is in our power, aided by the Holy Spirit, to rise even to the heights of the divinity. The Rosary will initiate us into the art of this ascent.

Theologians teach that every virtue was practised by the Word Incarnate in a perfect and heroic degree. His whole life was unceasing heroism. But the Rosary is the story of the life of Jesus; we see His heroism in each one of the fifteen Mysteries. The gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seeds hidden within Him, budded forth into abundant flower. Therefore, in order to contemplate virtue in its perfection, its zenith, we have only to meditate on the Rosary: for all those predestinated to heroism are by that very fact predestinated to become comfortable to Christ our Lord, Who reveals Himself in its Mysteries.

This devotion is truly a school wherein saints are formed.

A young man, John Gaulbert by name, set out one day accompanied by a large escort to avenge the murder of his brother. John surprised the murderer at a lonely spot. He was defenceless and powerless to escape and extended his hands in the form of a cross imploring mercy for the sake of Him Who was crucified for us. It was Good Friday. Such remembrance aroused the germs of heroism latent in John's soul. Not content with forgiving his enemy, he took him unto himself as a brother. Shortly afterwards, on entering a Church, the crucifix inclined its head towards him in reward for his heroic act.

The Mysteries are not only examples of heroism; they possess a special efficacy in making us practise what they teach. We have already said more than once that contact with the soul of the Word disposes us for the reception of those graces which can make us like unto Him. If we unite ourselves, then, with the heroism of Our Blessed Lord in the Rosary, we shall receive grace to be heroic like Him, when occasion requires. These special graces are, as it were, a ray of the sun which is sufficient to draw forth into flower the seeds of that heroism already in our souls. They are the divine breath which breathes over our souls and leads them whithersoever it wills. At least for some instants we no longer perceive our faults and imperfections. Words of Scripture seem to be fulfilled in us: *Saul is become a prophet.* Thus the Rosary is quite capable of making a soul rise to the very highest summits of holiness. Heroism is not of rare occurrence in the lives of the children of Mary.

But if heroism is a divine virtue, it must have a divine language. God lends to the heroes of sanctity a voice—namely the voice of miracles. The true Church in every age produces workers of miracles. Miracles were, so to speak, the thunder and lightning in the midst of which the New Law was promulgated. They were very numerous in the first centuries, because the voice of paganism still dominated the voice of truth, but they are necessary for every age to demonstrate the holiness of the Church and as

a means of converting souls. There are always unbelievers to be found. Every day we hear of unbelievers rising against Christ and His Church in countries where the Gospel has been preached for centuries. God silences these insolent revolutionaries; by His power and mercy He has recourse to the voice of miracles. Each year at Lourdes, and in other places throughout the world, the voice of the miraculous peals out like a thunder-clap in protest to the cry of unbelief, and sometimes even the most incredulous are forced to yield their submission. Miracles are not wanting to the Church. Christ himself promises that they would be granted to every age and every people. *He that believeth in me, and the works that I do, he also shall do; and greater than these shall he do.*[13] These words have been literally fulfilled. During every century down to our own day the Church has bestowed on her saints the signal honour and dignity of canonisation. But from each and all she exacts the tribute of miracles; and the examination preceding canonisation is almost excessively severe in this respect. However, saints have continued to pass the test, working the miracles required by the Church as they likewise paid the tribute of heroism during their lives.

The Rosary, which teaches us the practice of holiness and inspires us with the desire of heroism, has also been fruitful in miracles, thus giving proof of its divine origin and sanctity. We recall those words of Pope Pius IX: *Among all the devotions approved by the Church, none has been favoured by so many miracles as the devotion of the Most Holy Rosary.* It is worthy of note that the Virgin of Miracles, Our Lady of Lourdes, is also the Virgin of the Rosary; she holds up the Rosary before the eyes of the people, as a pledge of their hope and salvation.

The miracles worked by the Rosary have a social importance that is really tremendous. One of their outstanding characteristics is the fact that they won decisive victories for the Church. This is a point deserving of attention. The

[13] John, 14, 12.

very first encounter of the Rosary with the Albigenses resulted in the enemy being laid low and defeated. As a rule, great heresies are never entirely overcome by a single blow; their effects last during several generations and centuries after the death of their authors. They give rise to various minor heresies. The Albigensian heresy, on the contrary, was extinguished immediately, although it had as leaders some of the most famous of the clergy and laymen of the time. The institution of the Rosary completely confounded the heretics, and St. Dominic, while still alive, saw the enemy dying of its fatal wound without hope of recovery.

At a later period the Rosary gained another victory for the Church when Christianity triumphed over Islamism at the battle of Lepanto. The Mother of God appeared in the heavens, terrible as an army in the battle array, encouraging the Christians and terrifying the infidels. Here again the victory was decisive: the empire of Mohammed never recovered its past glories from this defeat; to-day it lies smouldering in insignificance.

In more recent times the Rosary crushed the power of Protestantism in France at the siege of La Rochelle.

We have mentioned the great historical miracles worked by the recitation of the Rosary. How many others, both spiritual and temporal, are wrought by Mary's intercession at every hour and moment of the day: miracles of healing, of conversion, of protection? Miracles and heroism enter into the life of every canonised saint and are a proof of his holiness; miracles and heroism are also intimately connected with the history of the Rosary; they bear witness to the holiness of the true Church.

Although these miracles were wrought by the intercession of the Mother of God, yet they are worked in the Church and for the Church; they serve to distinguish her from all the heretical sects. They are a mark of holiness.

We see, now, how the Rosary, rightly understood, can initiate us into all the various degrees of the spiritual life.

Let us implore of Mary the grace to be able to grasp some of its teaching; for if we have this practical understanding of the Rosary, we have acquired the science of the saints.